Third level education in Irish prisons: who participates and why?

Thesis

UNRESTRICTED

THIRD LEVEL EDUCATION IN IRISH PRISONS: WHO PARTICIPATES AND WHY?

Anne Costelloe

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

September 2003

Abstract

This exploratory study examines the reality of third level education for Irish prisoners. It is based on the perspectives of the prison students and the focus is on the students, their experiences, motivations and perceptions rather than on the actual provision. While comparisons and contrasts are drawn with the mainstream situation, the intent at all times is to increase an understanding of the impact of the prison context. As the title suggests, the research embraces two broad foci. It calculates and establishes a pattern of participation for prisoners engaged in third level study in Irish prisons, and it provides an ethnography of the experiences and motivations of third level prison students. The research ideologies framing the study are postmodern in influence, qualitative in approach and fall within the critical research paradigm. Both qualitative and quantitative methods have been employed to collect and analyse the data, the choice of method being determined by the specific research question. In general quantitative methods were used to construct a picture of the typical third level prison student. Qualitative methods were used to identify and examine the motivations of a sub sample of those prison students. It was concluded that the prison pattern of participation emulates the mainstream situation in its under-representation of traditional non-participants. It was seen that the motivations of those traditional non-participants that do participate are influenced primarily by the prison context while in general the motivations of the traditional participants mirror those of mainstream mature students. The research draws on and applies a rich body of theoretical literature concerned with the dynamics of adult learning and the substantive issues of social exclusion, participation and motivation.

Acknowledgements

I wish to acknowledge an enormous debt of gratitude to all those who made it possible to complete this study.

I am grateful to Dr. Marie Morrissey, my Supervisor, who provided guidance, advice and much practical help.

I am indebted to my colleagues and other prison educators, Kevin Warner, IPS Co-ordinator of Education, and Vincent Sammon, CDVEC Organiser of Education. I would particularly like to thank Ciaran - I could not, or would not, have done it without his help. I would like also to thank Cormac – his comments were most helpful.

This study could not have happened without the involvement of third level prison students. I am very grateful to each of them and hope the final product can somehow reflect their enthusiasm and hard work. I look forward to hearing any comments they may have on this thesis. I would like to acknowledge in particular the input of Stephen, Thomas and Glenn – 'nice one'!

Thank you to Sarah – proof-reader extraordinaire and good friend.

Finally I wish to thank my family - my parents for everything, Lorcan for bringing such joy into my life and Chris - to whom this is dedicated.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

AONTAS	Irish National Association of Adult Education
CORI	Conference of Religious in Ireland
CSO	Central Statistics Office
DES	Department of Education and Science
DETE	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
EC	European Commission
HEA	Higher Education Authority
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IPES	Irish Prison Education Service
IPS	Irish Prison Service
IT	Information Technology
MOBA	Motivation for and Barriers against Participation in Adult Education Project
NALS	National Adult Literacy Survey
NESF	National Economic and Social Forum
NIACE	National Institute for Adult and Continuing Education
NDP	National Development Plan
OU	The Open University
OECD	Organisation for Economic and Co-operation and Development
PPF	Programme for Prosperity and Fairness
RSGB	Research Survey of Great Britain
TMA	Tutor Marked Assignment
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation
VEC	Vocational Education Committee
VTOS	Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme

Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Rationale

Prisons and prisoners undeniably fascinate the public. It would seem that almost everyone, regardless of whether they have any experience of prison life, has strong opinions nonetheless on all matters penological. Intense media spotlighting and increased calls for public accountability coupled with departmental reticence fuels this fascination. The small body of Irish penological research that exists is largely quantitative, focusing on statistics and spawning generalisations. I believe this serves to dehumanise prisoners by lumping them into artificially created homogenous groupings. Resultantly prison research is reduced to accounts of recidivisms rates, sentence profiles, committal percentages and so on. As a consequence the individual prisoner is lost from view. The opportunity to consider them as a person with unique, yet comparable, motivations and needs is neglected. The chance to view the complete picture is lost. In Ireland prison ethnographers are a rarity. This research is an attempt to redress that imbalance somewhat. It attempts to describe and explore how and why particular prisoners are using their prison time to pursue advanced educational opportunities. It attempts to broaden the canvas and to sketch a holistic view of prisoners as students among other things. In so doing a more realistic and complete picture is painted.

While prison research is scarce, research into prison education is in even shorter supply. It is an assertion of this research that there is no distinct discipline of prison education in Ireland. I believe this to be a deficit as prison education is a unique discipline operating within an exceptional educational setting with an exclusive set of factors acting on it. This research calls for informed academic debate on this issue and aims to contribute to the emergence of a discipline of prison education in Ireland. This can be achieved by contextualising and conceptualising Irish prison education, providing it with an unambiguous theoretical framework and placing it within an instantly recognizable paradigm of adult learning. I hope to establish a coherent conceptual framework for Irish prison education. This can only bolster existing theory on adult learning by presenting the practice of prison education and the experiences of prison students to a wider audience. To test if prison education is unique, the

experiences and motivations of prison learners are compared where possible with those of mature third level students in mainstream provision. Indeed if this comparison is possible is one of the research questions framing this study. All such comparisons are set against issues of participation and motivation, topics to the forefront of academic debate and policy development on adult learning. The resulting picture will enable participants; practitioners, providers and policy makers reach a shared understanding of what it means to study while in prison. It should provide the reader with a clear understanding of the prison situation and its correlation with their existing understanding of adult learning. Consequently they can test and apply the validity and relevance of this particular research against existing educational research. It will enrich their understanding of the practical and personal benefits of education to marginalized groups, and will in turn consider the challenge of combating social exclusion through education.

Having outlined the shortfalls in present penological and related educational research, I stress that the study of third level education in prison is virgin territory. To date Scott's (1993) study of the sociological factors operating within four Irish prisons and their implications for third level education is the only such research to have been carried out in Ireland. Forster (1990) conducted the only significant published account of higher education in British prisons. International research in this area is sporadic and tends to focus on the role higher education has to play in recidivism. Thus any research within the Irish context will not only contribute to existing knowledge but also go some way towards bridging the gaps. No pattern of participation in third level education has been established for Irish prisons and thus new knowledge will be generated and documented. This will enable the study not only stand as an autonomous unit of research but also a template for future investigation to monitor changing patterns of participation or motivations. The findings can be applied across various domains of prison education and adult learning.

Not only is this study unique, it is timely, as third level prison education in Ireland is growing and evolving. The impact of such growth on present and future provision has implications for both policy and practice. A

comprehensive understanding of how this growth developed coupled with an examination of its meaning and value from the perspective of the prisoner can inform the providers and policy makers as to present realities and future expectations. It should provide information relevant to policy formation, service development, planning and deployment of resources. In addressing the existing information gap, new responses and approaches may be suggested so as to proof the prison education service against contributing to the problem of marginalisation and social exclusion.

While the rationale behind this research ranges from the macro to the micro and has significance on both a national and international level, a substantial aspect of the research concerns the students' perspectives. The primary focus is on their experiences and motivations. The collaborative element is sadly lacking in research on prison education. Rarely do prison students have the opportunity to make their voices heard. In this study the prisoners' voices are not only recorded but more significantly, a group of students were consulted at each stage of the research process and their views framed all aspects of the research design, data collection and analysis. Thus the study attempts to contribute not only to theoretical matters but also to methodological approaches to prison research in general and research on prison education in particular. It calls for collaborative research in the area of prison education. Third level prison students' perceptions of their needs and motivations must back up moves towards evaluating the appropriateness and effectiveness of the provision. Moves to evaluate appropriateness and effectiveness are particularly worrying for those concerned with third level prison education. Unlike mainstream third level education, prison higher education is directly subjected to, and influenced by, many factors. State trends in penal policy, changes in the philosophy of imprisonment and rehabilitation, judicial and media positions on crime and criminality, and societal evaluations of treatment programmes, all have the power to impact directly on provision. It is thus more vulnerable to popular shifts in ideologies than mainstream adult education opportunities. If it were decided to cut mainstream third level provision, public outcry would ensue. By contrast cuts to third level prison provision would generate little more that a few concerned letters to the editors of the national press. This research

attempts to anticipate any such eventualities and provide a forum in which the relevance of third level study for Irish prisoners is clearly established.

Again this research is timely because the management and organisational structure of Irish prisons is undergoing immense change. Traditionally prisons were the responsibility of the Department of Justice, Equity and Law Reform but Government policy is intent on creating a separate independent body, the Irish Prison Service (IPS), to take over this role. Legislation is being prepared to establish the IPS as a statutory, executive agency to bear sole responsibility for the State's prison system. Exactly how this transition will impact on the lives of the prisoners remains unclear but undoubtedly the impact on policy and regimes will be immense. This research is judicious in its timing and should serve as a guide to the voice of the prisoner in this time of change for all those involved with Irish prison life. Having established the rationale behind the research, I now outline the context within which it is set before moving to describe exactly what the research is about and how it was conducted.

1.2 Context

Prison education is well established in all Irish prisons. In the early 1970's the Department of Justice, Equity and Law Reform invited local Vocational Educational Committees (VEC's) to provide an educational service to the prisons. The VEC's have continued with this responsibility and today each prison has a thriving Education Centre (prison school) staffed by secondary school teachers employed by the VEC's and appointed to the Prison Service. The teachers enjoy the same terms and conditions of employment as mainstream secondary school teachers and thus are readily identified as being independent from the prison service. The VEC's are the main educational providers to the prison service and by their nature are concerned primarily with supplying secondary level and basic education. Any prisoner who wants to advance beyond secondary level must do so through distance learning channels. Third level education in Irish prisons is provided through various distance-learning courses. Since 1985 the largest channel of

provision has been the Open University (OU). The OU was the sole provider of degree level courses taken by Irish prisoners during the timeframe of the collection of the research data. In this research study fifty-six OU prison students responded to a postal questionnaire sent to them and later I interviewed thirty-eight of those respondents. By returning to the title of this research and setting it against the provision as outlined, it can be seen that the research was carried out by a prison teacher and involved prison students following third level courses provided by the Open University.

It is important to clearly define what is meant by third level education as used throughout this research. The terms tertiary education and higher education are eschewed as being too broad and all encompassing, third level on the other hand identifies most clearly the field being researched. In the context of this thesis, third level education refers to education at degree level and above, provided by an institution that is easily defined as an institution of higher education. Such an institution is a public or other non-profit institution, is accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency or association and is legally authorised to provide a programme of education beyond secondary education. Third level courses are those leading to the award of a bachelor's degree, graduate certificate, graduate diploma, master's degree or doctoral degree. In addition it includes courses leading to professional qualifications in such fields as accountancy and law where the final qualification has the standing of a degree. Extramural courses are excluded.

1.3 Research Procedures

The research took place over three phases. The first phase involved a pilot study, a dry run to test the methodology and contextualise the ongoing literature review. It should be noted that the collaborative element of the research involved a small group of third level students in the prison in which I work. The pilot study was conducted with them and their opinions, suggestions and comments were sought at each stage of the research process. The second phase of the research determined to establish a pattern

of participation for third level prison students. A postal questionnaire was sent to all third level prison students in order to attain data such as age, gender, educational attainment pre and post conviction, and present field of study. Analysis of the questionnaires generated a deep insight into the educational lives of the students' before, during and after imprisonment. A rich educational profile was made possible and a picture drawn of the typical third level prison student. This picture is only valid as long as it is clearly understood as a typification and generalisation to aid understanding and this caveat must be borne in mind throughout this study. The third phase examined prison students' motivations for third level study. A semi-structured, informal interview with over half of the cohort was carried out to access this data. This facilitated a deeper understanding of what third level education means to prisoners. Using each data source, a qualitative and quantitative analysis was employed in order to address the primary research questions. Accordingly, the postal questionnaires were analysed, the interviews were taped and transcribed before being analysed inductively to interpret, illuminate and illustrate the students' perceptions of their motivations. The detailed objectives of this process were to answer the research questions as outlined below.

1.4 Research Questions

As the title suggests, two fundamental questions lie at the heart of this research. Who avails of third level education in Irish prisons? Why do they do so? These questions raise questions of their own: Would they have done so had they not been imprisoned? Can comparisons be drawn between those studying at this level while in prison and those studying in the mainstream? Can comparisons be drawn between prisoners studying at this level and the rest of the prison population? What significance can be attached to the answers to these questions? These broad research questions can be broken down into secondary but equally pertinent questions. Does the prison pattern reflect the pattern of participation for mature students in mainstream third level education? If yes, in what ways and are their motivations the same? If no, how and why do they differ? Are the factors

that influence prisoners merely a response to the prison context or are more understated societal influences at play? Is there a unique combination of institutional and societal factors in operation within the prison context? Just as any group engaged in mainstream third level education is not homogenous, third level prison students are by no means a heterogeneous grouping. How then does this influence the participation picture? Do different categories[1] of prisoner; sex offender, juvenile, political prisoner or female prisoner, fall into clear patterns of participation or any at all? Does the length of sentence regardless of the category of offence influence the participation level? Does the pre-conviction educational experience or socio-economic status of the prisoner influence the participation pattern? If we accept McMahon's (2000) view that in Ireland adults over twenty-five, the lower socio-economic classes and ethnic minorities are still substantially under-represented in Irish universities, will this research identify a similar pattern within the prison walls? Why do the majority of prisoners chose not to be involved? Who is included in learning in the prisons and who is excluded? Who has control of this? How do we solve this if we view it as a problem? Does participation in higher education by some prisoners create an intellectual elite and widen even further the boundaries between inclusion and exclusion within the prisons and beyond their walls? Having identified who participates, the next step is to identify why have they chosen to participate? What are the motivating factors behind the students' decision to participate? The significance of these questions for those prisoners not involved in third level study, for the providers, for the sponsors, for prison educators and for the prison students themselves cannot be overemphasised and is considered in detail.

[1] Categorisation is an essential if not ideal aspect of the prison management process. Prisoners are classified and segregated according to gender, age, remand or convicted status, medical status, political status and in the case of sex offender on the basis of type of offence.

1.5 Summary of Subsequent Chapters

The remaining chapters of this thesis address the issues, concepts and research practices referred to in this introductory chapter. Chapter 2 is a systematic, thematic and interpretative review of the major national and international Government publications, academic treatises, research studies and literature relevant to this study. It locates the research within an international dimension and provides the context within which to look at associated theoretical perspectives. It outlines what is currently understood and the lines of argument concerning the areas of adult education, lifelong learning and prison education. It calls for a re-conceptualisation of Irish prison education to incorporate the ideals of a critical theory of learning. The review is related to recent thinking on participation and motivation in adult learning and the substantive issues of social inclusion and exclusion. In Chapter 3 the major themes to emerge from the literature review and the most pertinent theoretical considerations underpinning this study are outlined. It concludes with an examination of the significance and relevance of such issues to this research as well as a discussion on their implications. Chapter 4 details the research procedures employed and provides a rationale for adapting those particular procedures. It locates this qualitative study within the critical research paradigm and identifies those aspects of the research process influenced by the ideals and aims of collaborative and emancipatory research. Chapter 5 is subdivided into two sections. The first section summarises the findings of the questionnaire and in so doing addresses the research question; who participates in third level education in Irish prisons? The second section describes and gives voice to the motivational factors listed by the students in individual informal interviews and addresses the research question, why do these students participate? The thesis concludes in Chapter 6 with conclusions drawn from the data analysis and key issues to have emerged from the research and the literature review are considered. The implications of the research findings for future research, for policy and practice are explained and any contradictions and difficult questions posed throughout the study resolved.

Chapter 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction to Chapter 2

The literature review is structured around three thematic sections; adult education and lifelong learning, prison education, and participation and motivation. Each heading is interrelated and interdependent in terms of their relevance to the research questions, they are discussed in relation to each other and are subdivided for ease of orientation. Their significance for this study lies in my contention that third level prison education is more closely aligned with the ideals, practices and experiences of adult education than the standard university experience and hence the emphasis in this review on adult education and lifelong learning. Feasibly third level prison education could not happen without being facilitated by prison Education Centres and their staff. Therefore third level education is seen as an integral part of Irish prison education which is itself firmly placed within an adult education model as reviewed later. Furthermore, third level prison students are funded in their studies by the IPS. Thus, any attempts to examine third level prison education must be set against the broader context of prison education which is itself set within the context of adult education. The research title suggests the relevance of the issues of participation and motivation; accordingly, the final section of this review deals with those areas.

Social exclusion

The overarching perspective, against which each section is set, is the topical issue of the role of adult learning in minimising social exclusion. The review opens with the suggestion that adult learning has a rather contradictory role to play in reducing or widening social exclusion. It asks can education combat social exclusion by providing new routes to the labour market, or perhaps through non-economic returns such as the acquisition of social capital? Or is there a danger that widening participation is part of a normalising agenda rather than an empowering experience? The answer to such questions indicates what social exclusion is and the sort of contribution, if any, third level education might make to create a more equitable society for those imprisoned in Ireland

Social exclusion is defined by the Irish Government as "cumulative marginalisation: from production (employment), from consumption (income poverty), from social networks (community, family and neighbours), from decision-making and from an adequate quality of life" (The Partnership 2000 Agreement, 1996). The OECD (1999, 6) believes it to refers to "situations involving precarious incomes or poverty, being on the margins or out of the labour market with limited prospects of securing a foothold in it, housing and community environments equally typified by impoverished economic and social opportunities." According to Van der Kamp (1998) it involves economic, social and cultural factors that are structural in origin and he claims it is a post-modern condition for those marginalized from mainstream middle-class society (Van der Kamp, 1998, 104). I take social exclusion to refer to the economic, social, cultural and political marginalisation of clearly identifiable sectors of society. The socially excluded are viewed generally as being marginalized, disenfranchised and disempowered as a result of the normal social process to which we all subscribe unconsciously and by which we all abide. It is presumed, therefore, that they do not enjoy the same opportunities as the norm; they lack fulfilment of personal potential and view a perceived distance between themselves and the rest of society.

Whatever categorisation is chosen few would disagree that prisoners are among the most excluded members of Irish society. The Government's National Development Plan, 2000 - 2006 (NDP) concurs and states that prisoners "experience multiple disadvantage which accumulates leading to economic and social exclusion and to an extreme form of marginalisation from the labour market" (Government of Ireland, 1999, 194). It was advocated by the National Economic and Social Forum (NESF) (2002, 9) that prisoners must be included and assisted in all social inclusion strategies particularly the National Anti-Poverty Strategy. Social exclusion is not unique to Irish prisoners. Lang (1993) depicts the mass of prisoners in most countries as those "who are poorly educated and unskilled and have been unemployed for long periods or all of their lives. They live in sub-standard housing and have a wretchedly poor or deprived socio-economic and family background" (Lang, 1993, 53). O'Mahony (1993, 154) adds weight, claiming "economic and socio-cultural disadvantage plays an important role

in the kind of criminal behaviour that leads to incarceration." While criminologists may differ as to the exact relationship between social exclusion and crime, much longitudinal research has established clear and direct links between social deprivation and imprisonment, Farrington and West (1990), Kolvin et al., (1988), McGahey (1986). In the Irish context, Bacik et al., (1997), Carmody and McEvoy (1996), O'Mahony (1993, 1997b) and Rottman (1984) concur that socio-economic deprivation is a considerable factor in the criminalisation of an individual. While in-depth discussion on the link between crime and social exclusion is beyond the remit of this thesis, any relationship between social exclusion and prison higher education is very relevant.

Frequently adult learning is perceived as a counter to social exclusion because it facilitates social networking, widens access to cultural capital, develops self-confidence and opens new routes to the labour market. High levels of educational attainment are believed thus to play a significant role in the reduction of social exclusion. The European Commission's White Paper on Adult Education, Teaching and Learning: Towards the Learning Society (1995) maintains, "in most European systems, paper qualifications are designed with a view to filtering out at the top the elite which will lead administration and companies, researchers and teaching staff" (European Commission, 1995, 32). European Ministers of Education in the Sorbonne Declaration, (1998) called for the creation of a European arena of higher education as a key to promoting citizens' mobility and employability as well as the Continent's overall development. On a national level, Clancy (1995, 164) highlights "the pivotal role which educational credentials play in the status attainment process." But as mentioned not all agree with this view of the role of third level education in reducing social exclusion.

It is suggested that it may actually increase marginalisation because the forms of learning valued by those traditionally excluded, are themselves excluded from categories deemed useful by the dominant discourse. In addition, it is based on the assumption that cultural capital like economic capital is freely available to all and this masks its intrinsically limited and limiting discourse. Edwards (2000), Blaxter and Hughes (2000), Coffield (1999) and Schuller and Field (1998) have discussed the limitations of adult

learning in reducing social exclusion. While the main thrust of their arguments are outlined later in this chapter, they are raised here to emphasise that the view of adult learning as a counterbalance to social exclusion is perceived by many to be narrowly conceived and economically and intellectually debilitating. Much of the criticism has been levelled at its estimation of the socially excluded as dysfunctional groups from deprived communities who could be reintegrated into normal society if they take on board middle-class aspirations and behaviours such as adult learning. This emphasis by the dominant discourse on the individual, and its individualisation of the problem, removes responsibility from the state, brings about the commodification of education and indicates its evolution from within the ideals of globalisation. It should be noted that the antithesis of social exclusion is not simply social inclusion. Social exclusion is not an analytical phrase, it is political, it carries innate value judgements, and one positions oneself accordingly.

The significance of either argument for this research is tied into the belief that prisoners as a group are socially, economically, culturally and politically excluded from society at large. Does this mean that prisoners engaged in third level study are limiting their chances of further socio-economic exclusion on release? Or are they buying into a flawed concept and in reality actually widening their exclusion? The remainder of this chapter considers that dilemma. The next section reviews international and national policy documents on adult education. In it we can see that while the desire to challenge social exclusion through adult learning has gathered momentum, in many cases this is mere rhetoric as it rarely backed up by significant financial investment. A closer examination reveals that promotion of adult learning lies with the primary aim of increasing economic competitiveness rather then reducing social exclusion. This aim is masked by the appropriation of the term lifelong learning and its vicarious usage. This in turn has caused a pronounced discursive shift in the ideology of adult learning. The significance of this changing view of the role of adult learning for prison education is addressed in the latter half of this review. Differences in theoretical perspectives and ideologies underpinning this particular field of adult education are outlined and a re-conceptualisation of Irish prison education is advocated. The relevance of the critical adult

education field and the development of resistance education as associated with Brookfield (2001, 1987, 1985), Gramsci (1995, 1971), hooks (1994), Aronowitz and Giroux (1991) and Freire (1972) are highlighted. The chapter concludes with a review of current debates on the issues of participation and motivation in adult learning and an application of each issue to the context of Irish prison education.

2.2 Adult Education and Lifelong Learning

Nationally and internationally over the last two decades, there has been a major discursive shift away from the notion of adult education to one of lifelong learning. This is best exemplified by the EC's designation of 1996 as The European Year of Lifelong Learning and its more recent Memorandum on Lifelong Learning (2000). The most significant effects of this shift can be seen reflected in the policy documents under review. To analyse the impact of this shift in discourse and sequential change in policy direction, it is necessary to set the context in which this has developed. I outline the underlying causes and course of this discursive shift, the influences and driving forces behind the changes as well as the meanings and interpretation we can take from them. Without examining such issues it would be impossible to determine their affect on learning or their implications for Irish prison students. At its most basic level, the shift in nomenclature from adult education to lifelong learning has meant a move away from formal institution-based, accredited education to informal student-centred, learning activities. An initial glance suggests this should be seen as a committed political endeavour to widen access to learning among all citizens. To a certain degree this is true but we must question the reasons for this. Typical responses range from a desire to increased economic efficiency to a need to reduce social exclusion. Whatever the motivation, there can be little doubt that the changes have redefined our ideological perspectives on the societal role of education and learning. I suggest that the motivation lies at best in a need to meet economic and labour market requirements, and at worst in a desire to tighten control over the creation and transmission of knowledge. So while the discursive shift might appear

to have loosened the reins of power, it is in fact tightening them and the current rhetoric of lifelong learning serves to obscure this. But what evidence of this is there in policy documents?

National policy documents

In 2000 the Irish Government published its first White Paper devoted entirely to adult education. Behan (2002, 43) in his review of the Paper claims, "the allocation of resources indicates how we define adult education". This seems to be a good indicator of the underlying subtext of any policy document and using this index we can determine Government priorities from the allocation of funds. Perhaps the most salient indictor of the Government's priorities is the disparities between £73.8 million for the National Adult Literacy Strategy (DES, 2000, 58) and £568 million to a technology fund "to establish Ireland as a location for world class research in niche areas, in the ICT and biotechnology sectors." (DES, 2000, 125). Improving national literacy levels is seemingly not as important as attracting multinational companies. Furthermore, an extra £550 million was allocated "to enhance the research, technological development and innovation capacity of the third level education sector." Ironically this included £75 million for 5,400 places for IT learning in third level alone: roughly equivalent to the National Adult Literacy Strategy. Our Government clearly sees a significant role for universities in attracting these multinationals. This allocation of vast resources to technological learning is also in stark contrast to the allocation of £9.8 million to Traveller education (DES, 2000, 58).

The White Paper on Adult Education (2000, 123 – 125) goes on to outline how the Government earmarked £1.95 billion to meet the needs of maintaining a competitive economy. Yet this is an economy internationally recognised as being to the forefront of IT and high-tech learning but at the bottom of the scale in adult functionally literacy (OECD, 1997). The unbalanced allocation of funding can be set against the following statement from the preceding Green Paper Adult Education in an Era of Lifelong Learning (1998) that "tackling low literacy/numeracy levels must rank as the primary educational priority in Ireland" (DES, 1998, 69). As the

allocation of funding suggests this has proven to be mere rhetoric. In short, while claiming to wish to reduce social exclusion, funding for projects which may actually work towards this, such as Traveller education and adult literacy schemes, pales in comparison with funding for areas related more directly to national economic competitiveness. For me this stands as a prime example of the transformation of education from a citizen's right into an instrument of economic policy.

While these figures might speak for themselves a closer examination of other policy documents may help identify the rationale structuring the financing and establishment of new conceptions of adult learning. This is necessary as the White Paper on Adult Education (2000) merely represents the political announcement of a number of Government schemes and funding mechanisms placed within the remit of adult education without any clear discussion as to conceptions of adult education or lifelong learning. Any such trawl through policy indicates to me that there are few conceptual connections made between adult education and lifelong learning; instead a growing divide has emerged to muddy the waters. This divide has surfaced alongside the commodification of lifelong learning which itself promotes the selling of learning as product rather than the nurturing of it as process. This in turn serves to hinder the advancement of social inclusion as a possible by-product of adult learning.

What is interesting about the title of the Irish Government's White Paper on Adult Education is its catchall emphasis; being directly fixed on adult education but within the context of lifelong learning. This subduction of adult education under the umbrella of lifelong learning is clearly evident in the following stated priority; "to promote and develop a co-ordinated integrated role for adult education and training as a vital component within an over-arching framework for lifelong learning" (DES, 2000, 23). Yet within the document there is no discussion or distinction made between the concept of adult education and that of lifelong learning. It seems to be taken for granted that the concepts are transposable while at other times they suggest differing things. It leads me to concur, "that the language of lifelong learning and the knowledge society are virtually policy platitudes" (Ecclestone and Field, 200, 3). While stating that the adoption of lifelong

learning is the governing principle of educational policy, the White Paper on Adult Education (2000) fails to define lifelong learning. Yet it does define adult education as "systematic learning undertaken by adults who return to learning having concluded initial education or training" (DES, 2000, 12). This fait accompli attitude to the acceptance of lifelong learning as a framework for adult education is typical of how a dominant discourse comes to be accepted as common sense without any significant debate as to either meaning or intent. While the White Paper on Adult Education (2000) refers to a lifelong learning agenda, any in-depth definition of this concept must be elicited from its preliminary Green Paper on Adult Education (1998).

In the Foreword to the Green Paper on Adult Education (1998) the then Minister for Education stated, "lifelong learning marks a critical departure from the traditional understanding of the role of education in society" (DES, 1998, 2). He identifies this departure as embodying accepted ideals of widening and extending learning opportunities through recognising new types of learners, new forms of learning and new settings for learning. He suggests that the role of adult education must be "to promote economic competitiveness and employment, addressing inter-generational poverty and disadvantage, supporting community advancement and helping to meet the challenges of change" (DES, 1998, 2). It would seem that at this earlier stage the government had a wider conception of the role of adult education and a more egalitarian view of the possibilities afforded by lifelong learning. Yet on publication the subsequent White Paper on Adult Education (2000) indicated a marked change to a more fiscal view of the key issues at hand. To determine how that development may have came about, we should view the White Paper (2000) in tandem with more general national policy. Before examining the Government's most recent national strategic policy document, The Programme for Prosperity and Fairness (PPF) (2000), it would be a good idea to provide a brief overview of the National Development Plan 2000 – 2006 (NDP) as this investment plan highlights those areas considered worthy of increased funding by the Government.

As part of the NDP (2000) the Irish Government secured €52 billion for investment in the future development of the country from 2000 to 2006. Its

four base objectives for this development were to continue sustainable economic and employment growth, to strengthen and improve competitiveness, to foster regional development and to promote social inclusion. Twenty-five percent of that funding was to be invested in the areas of education and training and human resource development within the remit of the Employment and Human Resource Development Operational Programmes. This programme focused on measures to promote social inclusion, especially educational disadvantage. Little mention is made within the NDP of lifelong learning either as a concept or catchphrase, instead idioms such as education and training, skills development and human resource developments are used. One of the few references to lifelong learning is its declaration that one of the priorities of the National Employment Action Plans[2] is "to promote the development of a strategic lifelong learning framework" within which the adaptability of the workforce can be fostered. The objectives behind the adaptability is "to promote a skills trained and adaptable workforce by facilitating people in the wider economy and in specific sectors to adapt their skills to changing labour market requirements through further training, re-skilling and lifelong learning" and "to enhance the quality of labour supply through continued investment in education and training, and in particular, through developing a strategic and flexible framework for lifelong learning" (Government of Ireland, 2000, 64). This rather blinkered view of the possibilities afforded by lifelong learning is compounded by one of its key objectives "to enhance labour quality through education, training and, in particular, lifelong learning" (Government of Ireland, 2000, 20).

Such a narrow view of the role of lifelong learning is criticised by many adult educationists. Fleming (1996) would not be alone in the following contention.

> "Lifelong learning is largely driven by economic agenda. The push for lifelong learning is a push to develop our economy. Inside this Trojan horse we are in danger of finding cheerleaders for the enterprise culture. And that is

[2] In 1998 the EC adopted a Communication, entitled From Guidelines to Action: The National Action Plans for Employment, to examine the National Action Plans on employment drawn up by each member state. The central aim behind the National Action Plans was self-assessment by each state of labour market problems, needs and policies.

> deeply problematic. The enterprise culture is part of the problem. This is the same culture that produces unemployment and survives on the foundation of exclusion and social division" Fleming (1996, 59).

The NDP (2000) emphasis on lifelong learning in the narrow context of the labour market may be expected considering that in essence it is an attempt to draw down EU structural funds and perhaps this is why its Strategic Framework priority is to create a more skilled workforce. Yet the policy makers are neglecting the notion that social inclusion, as understood within the context of adult education, is not achieved merely through gaining employment but also through less tangible factors. Factors such as empowering the learners to think critically, strive for social capital, and question the social relations that create unemployment. Rarely are such ideas, or any such conceptualisation of the role of lifelong learning, debated in a Government policy document. My understanding of social capital as a concept, and as referred to throughout this thesis, is based on the belief that "social capital can help to mitigate the insidious effects of socioeconomic disadvantage" (Putman, 2000, 319). The World Bank Group (2003) sees it as that which refers to "the institutions, relationships, and norms that shape the quality and quantity of a society's social interactions... Social capital is not just the sum of the institutions which underpin a society – it is the glue that holds them together." In the context of this thesis I see it as a means, through social connections and networks, to access key resources. Most importantly it is itself a resource that can be utilised to bring about collective action and advance mutual interest.

Returning to the narrower view of the primary function of lifelong learning we can see that this is evident also in the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness (2000) produced around the same time. Its outlined suggestions for lifelong learning contain "a series of measures designed to speed up Ireland's transition to an Information Society" (Government of Ireland, 2000, 7). Here we can see the evolution of policy as the Government moves away from the rhetoric of creating a learning society, as seen in the Green Paper on Adult Education (1998), to the development of an information society, as proposed by the White Paper on Adult Education (2000). While the PPF (2000) echoes the Green Paper's (1998) emphasis on improving

adult literacy, it places this directly alongside IT, science and language skills. While thus reiterating its stated objective of building a fair, inclusive society based on lifelong learning, it proposes this only in tandem with adaptation to the Information Society. Perhaps most revealing of all is that it positions its chapter on lifelong learning under Framework IV for Successful Adaptation to Continuing Change, rather than Framework III for Social Inclusion and Equality, (Government of Ireland, 2000, 2). The chapter outlines the Strategic Framework for Lifelong Learning as being twofold; the publication of the White Paper on Adult Education (2000), and the establishment of a Lifelong Learning Task Force. Tellingly the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE) established the latter in conjunction with the Department of Education and Science (DES). In so doing, it appears to place equal responsibility for lifelong learning with the DETE and the DES.

This Task Force on Lifelong Learning was established to examine existing lifelong learning programmes and policy and apparent gaps in provision. It broke into two separate subgroups: Subgroup on Workplace Learning and Subgroup on Access/Barriers to Lifelong Learning, thus clearly delineating the responsibilities ascribed to each Government department. One of its key recommendations was the setting up of a Steering Committee chaired by the DETE to oversee and direct the work of the National Adult Learning Council. This Council was tasked to coordinate, review and report on the implementation of the framework set out by the Taskforce, and its role was to promote the development of adult learning, to ensure a coordinated strategy across the different sectors and agencies, to support quality, engage in research and promote international co-operation. While the National Adult Learning Council is an executive agency of the DES and brings together key stakeholders in adult learning, it operates under the guidance of a Steering Committee chaired by the DETE. This adds weight to my earlier assertion that the economic agenda is driving educational policy, or at the very least, the DETE helps steer lifelong learning developments. The lack of continuity surrounding the conceptualisation of lifelong learning, how it is to be advanced and who takes responsibility for its advancement is not unique to the Irish situation.

The OECD's 2001 Education Policy Analysis sets out how 15 countries define and operationalise lifelong learning. It suggests that Finland for example, is one of the few countries that have published a national statement outlining its vision of lifelong learning and contrasts this with Australia where no formal policy exists, OECD (2001, 12 - 14). One of the more pertinent observations made within this report, and perhaps of some comfort to the Irish Government, is the suggestion that internationally the broad concept of lifelong learning "has been embraced at the political level. But at the level of practical policy development and implementation, responses have been neither consistent nor uniform" (OECD, 2001, 39). Of particular interest to this research are the comparable lists of socio-economic background and access to third level education data, OECD (2001, 77). The international situation can be encapsulated in the following quotation, "despite a high political awareness that lower socio-economic groups often do not have equal access to tertiary education compared with higher socio-economic groups, there is little or no long-term progress in narrowing this social gap" (OECD, 2001, 78). This suggests that regardless of the rhetoric of lifelong learning, in reality increased participation and access for marginalized groups is not being realised in many of the world's most developed countries. This is confirmed by many research studies as discussed later in this chapter. They corroborate the comment from the Delors Document that "the tension between, on the one hand, the need for competition, and on the other, the concern for equality of opportunity continues to exist" (UNESCO, 1998, 2nd edition).

This latter document entitled Learning: The Treasure Within is a report to UNESCO by the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century, commonly known as the Delors Document, set the ideological perspective within which lifelong learning was to be one of the keys to future international development. The authors stress that lifelong learning and creating a learning society are to be seen as broader issues than just strengthening adult education opportunities. The report highlights the role of education in combating social exclusion "if it strives to take the diversity of individuals and groups into consideration while taking care that it does

not itself contribute to social exclusion" (UNESCO, 1998, 56). It would appear that this publication encompasses a broader and all-embracing view of education as a channel for social inclusion as well as economic growth. As seen, such an all-embracive definition has been largely neglected in national Government publications and it would appear to be no better for EC publications considering the genesis of its recent Communication, Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality (2000). According to the EC's website on adult education policy, "the Communication makes an important contribution to achieving the strategic goal set at Lisbon for Europe to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based society in the world". The Communication was developed from the consultative process of the EC's 2001 Memorandum on Lifelong Learning, the function of which was to identify strategies to foster lifelong learning and establish an Action Plan to implement its policy objectives. In reality the Communication does call for a broad definition of lifelong learning that takes adequate consideration of the opportunity for widespread social inclusion, even so, the above quotation does indicate that the discourse of globalisation is colonising international as well as national policy documents.

The impact of increased globalisation was recognised in the EC's earlier 1996 White Paper on Adult Education entitled Teaching and Learning: Towards the Learning Society. This paper was developed in response to the challenge facing Europe to create realistic and meaningful lifelong learning among its citizens in a period when internationalisation of trade and the development of the new information age had transformed the circumstances of economic activity in the member states, (EC, 1996). According to the EC White Paper (1996, 6) this upheaval would contribute to increased social exclusion among European citizens, the impact of which can only be softened by raising "the levels of qualification in general if social rift is not to widen still further and spread the feeling of insecurity." It discussed proposals for action advocating that they occur across a range of levels, local and national level, European level and between the EU and its member states. Such actions would involve supporting new methods of accreditation, validating skills and building bridges between educational institutions and the business sector in order to break down the ideological

and cultural barriers between them. Other actions involve promoting the principles of equality of opportunity through positive discrimination in favour of the socially excluded, the promotion of proficiency in several European languages and equally in treatment between capital investment and investment in training. As seen the promise of the latter action has not materialised in national policy.

Evidence of a discursive shift away from a broad rationale for adult education to a narrower view of lifelong learning is evident in national, international and EC publications. This shift masks an underlying desire to feed the needs of the state in a world of increasing globalisation. As a concept globalisation means different things to different people and even thought it is rooted glibly in public discourse it is almost impossible to arrive at a precise and universally acceptable definition. In its broadest sense it involves the integration of the world community into a common economic and social system. In its economic sense it considers the earth a global marketplace in which each state must meet market needs and cultivate economic competitiveness. Education is given the task of fostering this competitiveness by training the future workforce. Thus it is suggested that education has become an effect rather than a cause of economic pronouncements. Throughout this thesis I contend that globalisation is driving educational policy. I concur with the view that globalisation has led to the commodification of education and the transformation of education from a citizen's right into an instrument of economic policy.

Field and Schuller (1999, 1) claim this shift in discourse ensures that the phrase lifelong learning is accepted as a generic term covering both policy and practice. It illuminates "the tensions between a democratic vision of the Learning Society and dominant, utilitarian consensus" (Field and Schuller, 1999, 4). In a critique of the idiom learning society, Coffield (1999, 15) suggests, "what has developed in the UK is best described as a 'flexible society', fit for globalisation." How do such tensions affect the prison student? Can prison education equip him with the wherewithal to survive in the new learning society? I believe the answer depends on the type of prison education being pursued. The next section develops that suggestion

by analysing polemically Irish prison education documentation from an epistemological point of view.

2.3 Prison Education

This section outlines the philosophy of adult education within which Irish prison education rests currently. I delineate what I see as the shortcomings of this philosophy for prison education and suggest an alternative. Yet I recognise that the alternative is itself problematic and has its own shortfalls. In order to tease out the main threads of my argument I intend to relate my views on each philosophy to the current academic debate surrounding them. In so doing I hope to reach a perspective that can be applied to the prison context. Before attempting this I wish to clarify the presuppositions I hold concerning the nature of education and the role it has to play in society and I would like to discuss what I mean by philosophy of education.

My philosophy of education in not overly concerned with the aims and objectives, the curriculum, the methodology or even the process of teaching and learning, generally teachers reach a personal understanding of such matters through tried and tested practices and evaluations. I am concerned more with the relationship between education and the socio-cultural context within which it occurs. I agree with Caffarella and Merriam (1999, 63) that "learning cannot be separated from the context in which it takes place." The context of prison education is generally more problematic than other areas of adult education. This problematic context frames the questions, is prison education a contradiction in terms, "a impossible theoretical legerdemain" (Morin, 1981,15), "an oxymoron" Behan (2003, 1)? According to Morin (1981, 15), "at first glance the enterprise seems dubious: associating the most celebrated of liberating endeavours, education with the most radical of arrestments, prison." It seems to me that attempts to answer this question rely on clearly defining the philosophy of adult education most appropriate to the prison context.

By philosophy I am adhering to the view that "philosophies of education are interpretative theories, not applicatory theories" and "the value lies more in the importance of the questions asked then in the certitude of the answers given" (Elias and Merriam, 1995, 8). Such questions can lead to the formation of a theory of prison education and establish a sound philosophic basis for this particular field of Irish adult education. By doing so we can move from questioning meaning to describing function. It is this description of function that can best provide answers to that other fundamental question, why educate prisoners? Two strands of thinking are evident in the common responses to this question. Firstly prisoner education is viewed as a legal right on the grounds of article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights[3]. Secondly prison education is viewed as a human right based on affecting the notion of education as human development. This is the basic premise that lies at the heart of the humanist concept of education and at the heart of Irish prison education policy.

Humanism

The appeal of the humanist view to the prison situation is easy to grasp as it implies "growth in the plurality and totality of one's human dimensions" (Morin, 1981, 33). Its relevance for prisoners is encapsulated neatly in the following quotation:

> "For the inmate, this vision is full of hope and promise. It introduces him to the search for life's meaning, it allows him to grope with the fundamental why and wherefores, with the what for and what questions, for the idea which he has of himself will justify his existence, give meaning to his life and determine, in large measure, his conduct and behaviours" Morin, 1981, 33.

[3] **Article 26 states:** "Everyone has the right to education. Everyone has the right to an education. It should be free of charge, and everyone should be required to complete at least the early years of schooling. Education at a higher level should be equally available to everyone on the basis of merit. Education should strengthen respect for human rights" (United Nations, 2002).

Yet I have difficulty in agreeing totally with the latter half of this statement, believing it to be overly prescriptive as it places the stress purely on the individual and their conduct and behaviours. It is this individualisation that leads me to suggest that it is a purist view of the function of prison education. For this reason I call for something a little more grounded and I believe that critical education can best answer that call. Critical education appeals because of its counterhegemonic ethos, its attempts to deal with social justice issues embedded in inequalities of power, and primarily because it not only takes context into consideration but works actively to critique it. I believe such critiques are essential, as the certainties surrounding particular canons of knowledge and practices reinforce inequalities and marginalisation, and any attempts to identify and examine these certainties can lessen their impact. At present Irish prison education, because it is based in the humanist philosophy of education, fails to adequately address the hidden embedded hegemonic influences within education. It fails to address my concern that education is not value-free or neutral and thus I suggest Irish prison education should be redeveloped within the more radical humanist philosophy of critical education.

Before elaborating it is necessary to review the relevant literature in order to provide evidence that the policy is based in the humanist tradition and highlight what I see as its inherent shortcomings. The most influential policy document for Irish prison education is the 1990 Council of Europe's publication, Education in Prison. A review of it indicates that its underlying philosophy is synonymous with the humanist philosophy of adult education. It was drafted as a result of the 1984 European Committee on Crime Problems, which established a Select Committee of Experts on Education to study the system of education in prisons in the Council's member states. The Committee were directed to prepare a document concerning education within the regimes of penal institutions, consisting of recommendations and an explanatory memorandum. The resultant policy document, Education in Prison was published in 1990. It provides both a theoretical and practical vision of prison education and recently its recommendations have been updated and redrafted by is main author, Kevin Warner[4].

[4] Kevin Warner is the IPS's Co-ordinator of Prison Education. He has responsibility for the provision of educational services in Irish prisons. He is involved centrally in the

It must not be overlooked that Warner, the Chairperson of the Select Committee established to produce the report, is also Ireland's most influential prison education policy maker. Any attempt to examine policy, or indeed the development of a theory of Irish prison education, must be centred on his writing. The Council of Europe (1990) report was itself developed from the ideals and philosophy inherent in the European Prison Rules (1988). In an analysis of this document, Warner (1998, 119) identifies some of its underlying core principles, as stressing "there must be scope in prisons to offer prisoners opportunities to develop themselves" and that "serious participation by the prisoner must be based on respect for his or her human dignity" (Warner, 1998, 119). Such principles reflect the humanist view that all people have the ability to develop themselves and attempts to do so must be based on respect for human dignity.

Similarly many references in Education in Prison (1990, 20) promote the humanistic ideals of educating "the whole person in the totality of his or her social, economic and cultural context". Attempts to do so, meet the policy aim that "prison educators seek to afford opportunities to prisoners to increase self-improvement, self-esteem and self-reliance" (Council of Europe, 1990, 20). While Warner (1991) in his review of the report does not categorize these principles as being humanistic, he does refer to the perspective as an adult education approach. He identifies that approach as being developed against Rogers's (1986) definition of adult education (Warner, 1991, 13). Later, Warner cites Knowles' (1978) andragogical approach to adult education as the model for Irish prison education (Warner, 1993, 15). Both theorists are readily identifiable with the humanist view of adult education.

In this latter paper Warner (1989) claims, "to look in more detail at what is meant by adult education as the main 'theory' underpinning prison education", (his parenthesis). Yet he fails to clarify that theory in any great

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formulation of prison education policy, he sits on interview boards for teaching staff, he allocates the annual budget to each prison's Education Unit, he is the convener of the Prison Education In-service Committee and the Prison Education Council. The former provides in-service support to teachers in matters unique to prison education while the latter is a discussion forum for senior prison educators and educational agencies involved in prison education. He was the first chairperson of the European Prison Education Association (1991 – 96).

depth, concentrating instead on methodological matters. Throughout he provides guiding and organising principles by which practitioners should operate but little framework for analysis. There is nothing unusual or particularly lax in this, it serves merely to indicate that Irish prison education, like so many other fields of adult education, is a complex mix of what Usher and Byrant (1989) call formal and informal theory. For them, informal theory is the knowledge that emerges from and guides practice (Usher and Byrant, 1989 28). Informal theory can be tested and developed through formal theory and vice versa. This is analogous to Donald Schon's (1987) concept of reflection in action. Schon (1987) perceived practitioners engaging in an interpretative process by reflecting on and consequently developing their classroom practice rather than merely implementing policy and externally developed theories. He claimed that reflection-in-action is not something that takes place after the event, it is an action-present, a process in which "our thinking serves to reshape what we are doing while we are doing it" (Schon, 1987, 26) and really skilled practitioners can incorporate it into "the smooth performance of an going task" (Schon, 1987, 29). This organic notion of theory formation through reflection enables the cyclical growth of a body of skill, wisdom and experience. Warner's (1991, 1993, 1998) concern with methods and approaches indicates that he did not see a distinction between informal, practical theories and more formal theories of adult education, and one could argue that Irish prison education is all the better for that. Yet this lack of distinction, while providing a model and guidelines for practitioners in a field of education that was only ten years old, masked the reality that at no point in any policy statement was a conceptual framework defined in such a way as to allow for the identification of a theory of Irish prison education. As suggested earlier the identification of a philosophy of prison education can describe meaning but is the theory of prison education that describes function.

I am not the first to suggest that there is no clear theoretical framework that defines Irish prison education. Dinneen (1995, 15) proposed that prison education is categorised merely as a branch of adult education and suggests this is shortsighted because prison education is not simply adult education behind bars. She posits the argument that "prison-based adult education is a separate discipline, it is a unique educational setting with unique sets of

factors acting on it" (Dinneen, 1995, 15). For her any attempts to ignore the prison setting are non-productive and ineffectual. By stressing that the Irish prison population is a homogeneous and socially deprived grouping she believes that it is futile to impose a model of adult education designed for a more egalitarian mix of people. Thus she calls for a new approach and a separate discipline. She goes on to berate Irish prison educators suggesting, "it is not enough for us to adopt policy document recommendations and to work within a poorly defined adult education model" (Dinneen, 1995, 15). For her there is no clear theory of prison education because international adult education theorists and researchers, and equally those Irish academic institutions that focus on adult education, have all failed to consider prison education and its place in the larger picture (Dinneen, 1995, 14). This lack of debate on prison education is mirrored by a similar lack of debate on the role, functions and ideology of adult education in Irish society. Fleming (1984) claims that there is a shortage of philosophical thinking concerning adult education and attributes this to the commonly held view of theory as being boring, irrelevant and unrelated to practice. Thus the outlook for prison education is bleak, if the theorists fail to focus on the larger picture of adult education, they may never focus on the vignette that is prison education.

Radical humanism

While claiming that the foundations of Irish prison education lie within a humanistic school of thought, I appreciate that faint traces of a more radical philosophy can be found in some of the earlier publications as indicated by the following quotation from Education in Prison (1989). In discussing the benefits of providing social studies courses for prisoners, the report states that "such study can involve anything from informing students about how to vote, to explorations of a social issue such as pollution, to a theoretical analysis or critique of society. But at whatever level such study takes place, those studying are able to retain their critical perspective on society if they wish" (Council of Europe, 1989, 55). Such statements resonate with followers of Freire and other radical humanists. Indeed Freire advocated a similar view in suggesting, "the methods of dialogical education draw us into the intimacy of society, the *raison d'etrè* of every object of study"

(Freire and Shor, 1987, 13). Recently, a more radical perspective advocated by Behan (2002), who cites many from this broad tradition including Freire (1972, 1998), Shor (1987, 1992) and Hart (1990), concludes that prison education can only really benefit the needs of the prisoner by acting as a counter culture to the regime itself. Meanwhile Warner (1998) remains faithful to the humanists' camp by taking on board the writings of Mezirow (1983, 1989).

What Warner (1998, 128) suggests Mezirow's (1983, 1989) transformative learning has to offer Irish prison educators is "the key concept of 'meaning perspectives', that is the structure of presuppositions that we use to interpret experience". He explains that the process of critical reflection afforded by adult education leads the individual to challenge the validity of their presuppositions and this can in turn lead to a perspective transformation. This "genuine change in the fundamental assumptions a person holds" can transform the prisoner's view of himself and his world as he leaves prison (Warner, 1998, 128). Of course this begs the question, how effective can any such change be if the world to which the prisoner returns remains the same? Nonetheless transformative learning that "occurs when we find that our old ways of understanding are no longer working well for us" (Mezirow, 1995, 1) has strong resonance for prison students. Particularly Mezirow's opinion that "transformation theory is an explanation of how our frames of reference influence the way we make meaning and how they may be transformed to empower adult learners and to foster community development" neatly encapsulates for me the relevance for prison education (Mezirow, 1995, 1). However there is still the issue that just because you leave prison more empowered, more critically aware and more autonomous in your thinking, you are returning to a society and culture that fails frequently to facilitate such transformations.

In short the social context is ignored and for me this is its Achilles heel. Mezirow (1995) does address this somewhat, and in doing so echoes Freire, by suggesting "that adult educators becomes social activists" who encourage their learners "to become aware of how taken-for-granted, oppressive, social norms and practices and institutionalised cultural ideologies have restrained or distorted their own beliefs, they become understandably motivated

towards taking collective actions to make social institutions and systems more responsive to the needs of those they serve" (Mezirow, 1995, 4). The adult learner moves beyond personal growth and becomes aware of the factors that limited their growth in the past. This raised consciousness of the social and political constructions in their culture and society allows the learner strive for social and personal emancipation. But is self-actualisation enough? And how is it be actualised?

Others (Inglis 1997, Clarke and Wilson 1991, Collard and Law 1989) have criticised Mezirow (1998a, 1998b, 1997, 1983) for failing to specify a role for social action in transformative learning. In addition the focus on the individual in perspective transformation reverts to the humanists' individualisation of things as criticised earlier. Inglis (1997, 6) asserts that Mezirow's theories "leads to an over-reliance on the individual rather than social movements as the agency of social change and, consequently, an inadequate and false sense of emancipation." This individualisation is subordinating and disempowering rather than transforming. It removes responsibility from society and has come to signify the direction taken by the dominant discourse of adult learning as suggested earlier. Fleming (2001, 6) on the other hand, believes that "the dichotomy between individual and social development is a spurious one for educators." He feels Mezirow has answered his critics by drawing a distinction between fostering critically reflective learning and fostering social action. For him adult education can have goals other than collective social action and action can be social or individual, it is not mutually exclusive. Indeed it is true that education can have other goals. Yet awareness that education itself is never neutral, but embedded always in narrow ideological and political strictures, should ensure that "adults learn to recognize and challenge ideological domination and manipulation" (Brookfield, 2001, 7). By thus accepting that education is a site of political and cultural contestation then attempts at social action, either collectively or individually, may follow for those who come to this realisation.

What is important here is the word may, because as Mezirow (2000) so rightly points out, "we need to recognise the difference between our goals as educators and the objectives of our learners" (Mezirow, 2000, 30). This for

me helps silence his critics, because sometimes the educationalist's and the learner's goals and objectives might be the same but mostly they will differ. Without both parties engaging in critical reflection that recognises and acknowledges this neither goals nor the objectives will be met to any satisfactory degree. In short the difference between Mezirow's perspective and that of his critics is basically one of process and product, with Mezirow seeing the product as a critically transformed learner who is now in a better position to consider possible social action, and his critics simply seeing the product as social action. In so doing they may be in danger of losing sight of the learner.

If Mezirow is to be accused of being strong on process but ultimately weak on action, a similar accusation could be laid at the door of the more radical approach. Claims by Freire (1972, 119) that the individual can change the status quo by the exercise of praxis, or action with reflection, which can overthrow the oppressors through this praxis of conscientisation needs to be examined. Freire made this concept popular as "the deepening of the coming of consciousness" (Freire, 1993, 110). Critical consciousness or 'transitive consciousness' as described by Freire in Smith (1973) is "characterised by depth in the interpretation of problems; by the subjection of causal principles for magical explanations; by the testing of one's findings and by the openness to revision; by the attempt to avoid distortions when perceiving problems and to avoid preconceived notions when analysing them; by refusing to transfer responsibility; by rejecting passive positions, by soundness of argumentation, by the practice of dialogue rather than polemics, by receptivity to the new for reason beyond mere novelty and by the good sense not to reject the old just because it is old, by accepting what is valid in both old and new" (Smith, 1973, 60). Perhaps the clearest explanation and the most relevant to prison education refers "to learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality" Mayo (1999, 63). For Freire (1972) the highest level of conscientisation is dialogical. He characterised this "by depth in the interpretation of problems, self-confidence in discussion, receptiveness, and refusal to shirk responsibility" (Freire, 1972).

Many would suggest that frequently such qualities are lacking in the prison population and thus conscientisation is the way forward. Yet I wonder is conscientisation enough? What if the prisoner finds after being through the process of conscientisation that his values are not those of society, or worse still, what if he is being punished for having them in the first place? How relevant can Freire's idea of radical conscientisation as the true function of education be to an individual who places no value on any form of education? Do we merely insist that they are wrong and tempt them into participating because we know that inevitably they will see the light? Such questions are developed later in this chapter in line with Field's (1999) view that most adults refuse to participate in education due to its reinforcement of that which is deemed culturally valuable in a given society but which they consider to be irrelevant. For now they serve to posit the broader question, is there anything inherently liberating in the more radical humanist philosophy of adult learning regardless of its rhetoric of social change? Yet before exploring the relevance of radical adult education I will summarise my arguments so far.

Having examined the leading policy documents and papers I came to the conclusion that while Irish prison education has no clearly stated theory of education under which to operate, the influences of humanism are most evident. The humanist perspective suggests that adult education offers the prisoner empowerment through personal growth and development but little attention is paid to changing the social order or the society to which the 'newly developed' prisoner must return. While accepting that 'changing the system' is not always the aim of adult education, ignoring the impact of the system on the learner's life choices, is akin to sticking your head in the sand. Alternatively a theory of prison education must be developed that increases the learners' understanding of the social, political and economic influences on their cultures in order to bring them to an awareness of reflective social action that recognises that with rights go responsibilities. The best possibility for this to occur lies within the emancipatory theory of critical education.

While much has been written about critical education it is difficult to ascertain a simple and definitive definition. Not only is it difficult to pin down this all embracive view of adult learning, it is difficult also to find a universally-shared title, falling as it does under so many labels; radical pedagogy, emancipatory education, resistance education, counter-hegemonic education and so on. This is because there is no actual consensus as to either title or principle, just a broad umbrella under which many subsets shelter. Gore (1993, 8) disapproves of the lack of cohesion and dialogue between the varying subsets of discourse and blames this on the theorists, in particular Giroux (1988, 1991), McLaren (1988, 1989), Shor (1980, 1987) and Freire (1978, 1987). She claims that fragmentation of the subsets is the primary cause of their marginality from mainstream educational practice and policy (Gore, 1993, 2). Perhaps she is right, a quick reading would suggest that they have much more in common than they care to admit. This common ground is identifiable by the similarity of assumptions, aspirations and language; all of which are rooted in a radical and non-traditional discourse, that focuses on power relations and how this affects the educational process. Gore (1993) provides a succinct outline of a number of their commonalities.

> "They each emphasize student experiences and voice, assert the objectives of self and social empowerment towards broader social transformation, speak about teachers' authority and struggles with the contradictions inherent in the notion of authority for emancipation, are linked to political and social movements that seek to erase multiple forms of oppression and suggest similar classroom practices" Gore, 1993, 7.

While the complex mix of influences such as Marxism, feminism and critical theory have merge to muddy the water, they are nonetheless all seeking to challenge the status quo. Consequently we can see that unlike the humanists, critical educationalists view education as having an innate social and political purpose and are less concerned with individual growth than with changing social order, unequal power relations and cultural transmissions. It is this emphasis on society rather than the individual

which suggest to me that this particular branch of adult education is most appropriate for Irish prison education.

Gore (1993) goes on to delineate the varying subsets of critical pedagogical discourse, by doing so identifies two subset I feel have much to offer Irish prison education. These subsets are categorized by Gore (1993, 33) as critical *pedagogy* and *critical* pedagogy (her italics). The differences lie with the latter's interest in the 'macro' levels of the ideologies and institutions, and the former's in the 'micro' level namely teaching strategies. She further distinguishes them by calling the former "critical pedagogy as constructed by Freire and Shor". The latter "emphasizes the articulation of a broad social and educational vision" and she names Giroux and McLaren as its seminal promoters (Gore, 1993, 17). Critical *pedagogy* on the other hand is concerned with "pedagogy as classroom practice consistent with liberatory politics" and she identifies Freire 91978, 1987) and Shor (1980, 1987) as its key advocates (Gore, 1993, 42). She concludes that Giroux and McLaren vision is not one of critical *pedagogy*, but rather critical educational theory aimed at enabling teachers develop their own critical pedagogy (Gore, 1993, 24). However subtle the differences may appear, my argument is that both are relevant to the prison context because critical *pedagogy* has much to say to the practitioners, as has *critical* pedagogy to the policy makers. Any debate concerning them, their impact on praxis and their significance for prison education can only advance an emancipatory theory for prison education.

To recap there is no singular theory of Irish prison education and my attempts to identify one have allowed me assemble the influences shaping its development. The impact of humanistic thinking can be distilled and culled from its early literature. As the service evolved, the ideals of transformative learning became influential, while at present other more radical theories are beginning to exert their own influence. That is not to say that the earlier humanistic perspective has little to offer prison education. Its concern with the holistic development of the learners is of the utmost relevance and this concern is why it is the perspective that prevails in adult learning circles according to Jarvis (1995, 208). Yet popularity is no guarantee of perfection and perhaps it is time to crown a new perspective. I

suggest that such a perspective must be based within the ideals of critical education, while consensus may never be reached as to the particular subset most appropriate to prison education, or indeed if any such approach is appropriate, theorising must occur. Should it occur I would be suggesting that critical theory has a considerable contribution to make to any ensuing debate.

According to Brookfield (2001), the most influential theory to impact recently on adult education research and theorising is critical theory.[5] This emergent philosophy is synonymous with the type of critical education to which I have just referred. Habermas was concerned with the social construction of knowledge and advocated collaborative dialogue as communicative action and praxis as a dialectical process. It is this belief in the ability of education to enhance the individual's communicative competence that then allows for collective action. Thus it adds credence to Freire's normative claims for an emancipatory pedagogy for the oppressed. Brookfield (2001) goes on to suggest that such critical theory "undergrids important aspects of transformative learning theory of Mezirow (1991), particularly his highly influential formulation 20 years ago of a critical theory of adult learning and education" (Brookfield, 2001, 7). The philosophical approach and basis of critical theory can be gleaned from the following quotation, which reveals once more its relevance for prison education.

> It springs from a distinct philosophical vision of what it means to live as a developed person, as a mature adult struggling to realise one's humanity through the creation of a society that is just, fair, and compassionate. The vision of critical theory holds individual identity to be socially and culturally formed. Adult development is viewed as a

[5] My conception of critical theory is that which is associated with the 1930's Frankford School of thought as diverted via Habermas. Its significance for this thesis lies in the following quotation from Brookfield (2000, 7). "In terms of intellectual traditions that have had a significant impact on adult education research and theorizing in the past two decades, it is critical theory particularly that associated with the Frankford School that is arguably the most influential." He goes on to suggest, "developing critical capacities in ourselves and others invites criticism from those who are ruffled by being asked awkward questions. It will frequently be in the interests of some dominant individuals and groups not to have people become critical thinkers. Critical questioning is the last thing those in positions of power who are autocratically seeking to retain the status quo wish to see" (Brookfield, 1987, 65). The relevance of this school of thought for prison education as discussed throughout this thesis lies in its framing of the intellectual tradition of ideology critique as discussed above. [5]

> collective process because one person's humanity cannot be realised at the expense of other's interests. Given critical theory's insistence that opportunities for development do not remain the preserve of the privileged few, the theory inevitably links adult development to the extension of economic democracy (Brookfield, 2001, 12).

If we concur with the view of prison education that it should offer the student "a more 'natural,' 'organic', or 'authentic' process of self-transformation through empowerment, communication of values, and the formation of new interests" (Duguid, 2000, ix), then we must also concur that it is education based on critical theory that can best proffer this. Its suitability to the prison context lies in its focus on the relationship of knowledge, power and ideology; and its refusal to ignore the idea that education, either consciously or subconsciously, merely transmits university-generated canons of knowledge. As suggested earlier the basic difference between the present approach and the suggested alternative is the emphasis on the individual versus the social. The individual may be transformed while in prison but any positive and supportive transformation of the society to which he returns rarely occurs. Critical education enables the adult learner recognise and understand the social, political and cultural controls and influences that are buttressing and constructing their experiences. It reveals these as constructed realities and experiences designed to protect the interests of the powerful according to Gramsci's (1995, 1971) definition of hegemony. The notion of hegemony refers to the ways in which social forces are engaged in a constant struggle for political, intellectual and cultural leadership and control. Yet when the successful force becomes dominant it can be contested. Gramsci (1995) developed hegemony as the way people learn to accept as natural, and in their own interests, an unjust social order. In other words hegemonic assumptions are uncritically held beliefs, values and ways of knowing that serve the interests of the power brokers. In terms of this thesis the notion is best encapsulated by Shor's (1987, 9) depiction of "the political hierarchy of knowledge" and how "some knowledge is given more value than others." Critical education can work to interpret and address the political hierarchy of knowledge. According to Brookfield (2001, 21), it "studies the systems and forces that

shape adults' lives and promotes adults' attempts to challenge the ideology, recognise hegemony, and unmask power." Having reached the stage of being able to mindfully transform problematic assumptions and frames of reference it is up to the learner to decide what to do next.

The emphasis on critical education does raise the issue that much of what I am proposing for prison education already exists within the methodologies and traditions of community education. In particular its concern with the needs of those most educationally disadvantaged and disempowered, and its focus on exploring personal experiences within a framework of social, community and political issues to enable recognition that the personal and the political are intertwined. Similarly its prerequisite of being located within, and from, the community suggests correlations for the so-called prison community. Indeed in any re-examination of the prison situation the linkages must be explored in more depth as suggested in the last chapter to this thesis. For the moment the relevance of community education for prison education serves to reinforce my view that prison education should enable the prison student participate fully and at every level in the communities to which they will return. As a result some of the questions raised earlier as to how the process of transformative learning is to impact on the prisoner's life after his release, how self-actualisation is to be actualised, can be addressed.

Having wrestled with the debate between the humanist and radical humanist paradigms of education within the prison context, I am forced to concluded that what really matters is the learner. I agree, "in fostering transformative learning efforts what counts is what the individual learner wants to learn" (Mézirow, 2000, 31). I am not suggesting the definitive version of prison education, merely my own views on what is most appropriate. I am hoping to raise awareness that presently there is no stated theory of prison education and attempts to define one are problematic. Yet this needs to be tackled as I agree with Duguid (1981, 47) assessment of prison education that, "education of itself is not sufficient, rather it must be education with a particular goal, a particular content and a particular style." Thus we must have at our disposal a clear mandate and theory for prison education particularly in light of changing views of regime managements and

increasing attempts to promote programmes that address offending behaviour.

Finally in suggesting the refashioning of Irish prison education along the lines of critical education, I am aware of Brookfield's (2000,133) comment that "it is quite possible to believe that one is working in a libratory vein, only to discover that one's efforts have bolstered the hegemony one was supposed to be opposing." And I suggest that the reverse is also true. One can work to bolster the hegemony and end up liberating if only in the sense of giving people a more secure and seemingly happier environment. In so doing one is advancing the primary aim stated in the Strategy Statement of the Irish Prison Education Service 2003 – 2007, that of "helping prisoners cope with their sentence" (IPS, 2003, 1). Yet, prison educators should be careful of this benign view of the role and possibilities of prison education. The very presence of the teacher in the prison school means that they are colluding with the state's apparatus of control, its overt locus of hegemony. Without a critical examination and debate on that hegemony, on the role of the prison teacher, the prison service and the prisoner in the perpetuation of that hegemony, prison education fails all those it claims to assist. This predicament is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4. The remaining sections of this chapter are concerned with the topical issues of motivation and participation in adult learning. Without an awareness of what motivates prisoners to participate in prison education any attempts to debate its theoretical perspectives are redundant.

2.4 Motivation and Participation

Research into the area of adult motivation for learning has tended to be twofold. Earlier research concentrated on producing a typology of adult learners based on motivational factors, while more recent research concentrates on identifying barriers to participation. Furthermore the latest dimension is concerned with the complex issue of non-participation in any form of adult learning. The remainder of this chapter deals with the evolution from motivation to participation discernable in the literature and

serves to indicate how difficult it is to separate each issue. Indeed it proposes the argument that they are two sides of the same coin and should be examined in tandem.

Participation

Houle's (1961) in-depth study of a small group of learners was one of the first to create a general framework or typology of adult motivations for learning. He identified three groups of learners based on their learning orientations and categorised them into (1), goal-orientated learners, those who have clear-cut objectives for participation, (2), activity-orientated learners, those who are socially motivated, and (3), learning-orientated learners, those who participate due to their love of learning for its own sake. In 1965 Johnstone and Rivera (1965) carried out the first U.S. national study on participation. They built on Houle's (1961) typologies and went on to identify two categories of barriers to participation, the first, which they termed dispositional barriers, were internal to the individual and the second were external, or situational barriers as described by them. Boshier and Collins (1984) carried out a large-scale empirical study on Houle's (1961) typologies and concluded that his activity-orientated grouping was an oversimplification. On account of this, they subdivided it into four subgroups, (1), those seeking social stimulation, (2), those seeking social contact, (3), those involved due to external expectations and (4), those participating in order to serve better their community. Meanwhile Cross's (1981) three-stranded conceptual framework of barriers to participation had come to dominate thinking in this area. Based on the work of Carp, Peterson and Roelfs (1974), she grouped participation barriers into three headings, situational, institutional and dispositional. Situational barriers depend on ones situation in life, matters such as lack of time due to work constrains; family responsibilities or inadequate childcare would fall into this heading. Institutional barriers arise from the practices and procedures of the institutions that might hinder participation, factors such as cost, limited course choice and inconvenient timing being applicable here. Thirdly dispositional barriers created by the adult's individual attitude to education finally came to be recognised as a factor in participation.

This work by Cross (1981) was noteworthy in its confirmation of both the extrinsic and intrinsic values placed by adults on learning and promoted more enquiry into this complex mix. Darkenwald and Merriam (1982) further expanded on these frameworks and included informational barriers. In 1990 Beder and Valentine (1990) explored the motivational orientation of a particular target group (low level literate students participating in basic education programmes). Their identification and ranking of ten motivational factors provides a conceptually meaningful framework for the diversity of motivations offered by any group of learners. Those ten factors can be summarised as: Educational Advancement, Self-Improvement, Literacy Development, Community/Church Involvement, Economic Need, Family Responsibilities, Diversion, Job Advancement, Launching (i.e. life changing event such as marriage or parenthood) and Urging of Others (Beder and Valentine, 1990). Other research into barriers to participation predating the above, namely Scanlon and Darkenwald (1984), Darkenwald and Valentine (1985), Valentine and Darkenwald (1990), ensured that the focus for research was placed firmly on barriers to participation and gradually a move away from issues strictly related to motivation had emerged.

Analytical research on motivation and barriers to participation was not limited to North America. In her synopsis of European research, McGivney (1993, 12) cites the suggestion by Woodley et al., (1987) that participants in adult learning are predominantly middle-class and thus do not represent a cross-section of the population. Furthermore she outlines research by Hedoux (1982) into working class participants, which indicates that those that do participate are an active social minority characterised by traits that are normally associated with the middle classes, in particular improved material circumstances, greater mobility, higher levels of initial schooling and being active in local community life and cultural activities (McGivney, 1993, 13). What is particularly interesting is the shift in focus from typologies and motivational features to issues of inequality of access and non-participation. It would appear that this shift had come to supersede the notion of identifying a model of adult motivation for learning and has contributed to the issue of motivation largely being subsumed into the wider arena of participation in adult learning. I consider this a welcome development as it lessens the emphasis on individual consciousness, which

is ultimately ineffectual without due consideration of societal processes and structures. Instead more recent researchers into adult motivation tends to take a holistic view of the participants' intrinsic interest value of learning as well as their extrinsic utility value of learning.

That is not to suggest that the literature claims motivation can be summarised as a simple dichotomy between intrinsic or extrinsic factors. People are more complex than that and social, cultural, spatial and financial factors are usually interacting and interrelated. Nevertheless it could be suggested that in the United Kingdom during the 1990's, the research emphasis was placed firmly on identifying extrinsic factors such as structural and educational obstacles (Courtney 1992, McGivney 1991, 1997), financial barriers (Sargent et al., 1997), and with the publication of The Learning Divide Revisited (Sargent 2000) socio-economic class was identified as the key barrier to participation. The general consensus appeared to be that adult education was primarily a middle-class activity serving middle-class interests. While we can see that in previous decades much of the research was concerned with issues of motivation, suddenly the focus shifted to strict participation research as evidenced in the National Adult Learning Survey (NALS) (1997), or the various NIACE backed annual surveys such as Marking Time (1999), the MOBA Project (2000) and the RSGB Survey (2000). It would seem that there are strong a priori reasons for this. After all if the research confirms that a large section of the population does not participate in adult learning then the next step would be to determine why that is so? Consequently the literature begins to question what is preventing people from participating. The thrust behind this shifting emphasis appears to be based on the notion that an individual's motives are influenced strongly by social, cultural, spatial and financially forces and any attempts to ignore these constraints or these incentives are pointless. In general the studies listed here confirmed that the key factors in adult participation tend to be previous educational experiences and social background and these were seen as the prime predicators of an individual's potential for further education. As a result some studies centred on identifying an individual's learning trajectory. Gorard et al., (1999a) suggest that by examining such potential predictors, participation trajectories are highly predictable and they go on to suggest that social

background is the primary determinant. Correspondingly they claim that participation trajectories remain very similar within families (Gorard et al., 1999b) giving further testimony to the view that socio-economic and psychological factors are primary influences.

Other studies confirm the relationship between participation in higher education in particular and factors such as socio-economic class, gender and race. In Ireland Lynch and O'Riordan (1998, 1996) state that their research findings indicate the primacy of economic factors in limiting participation but acknowledge that this operates in close interaction with cultural and educational barriers. The latter is significant because as early as 1990, McGivney had established a non-participant typology and she suggested also that the most significant barriers were to do with attitudes and expectations (McGivney, 1990). Again the Irish situation appears similar. Bailey and Coleman (1998) and Cousins (1997) cite lack of confidence and low self-esteem as key dispositional barriers to participation. Lynch (1997) states that participation rates among mature students in higher education are particularly class-differentiated, claiming that disadvantaged groups are not noticeable in the rising mature student representation at third level evident in recent years. This is confirmed in the Higher Education Authority's (HEA) recently commissioned report's Points and Performance in Higher Education: A Study of the Predictive Validity of the Points System (2000, 37) assertion that "social class does exercise some impact on participation in higher education." Of particular interest in Lynch's account is her summary of the motivations for entry to higher education among mature students (Lynch, 1997). She classifies mature students into four groups based on motivational factors; namely second chance students, those seeking to update or re-enter higher education, those following work related courses and those satisfying personal fulfilment factors (Lynch, 1997). These motivational factors are discussed in more detail later in this chapter and also compared with the research findings in the penultimate chapter.

Non-participation

Returning to patterns of participation, a recent study of the barriers to male participation in education commissioned by AONTAS (Irish National

Association of Adult Education) concluded that the small minority of working class men that do participate do so in vocational or job related activities (Owens, 2000). This is unsurprising if we concur with McGivney's (1999a) assertion that male identity is chiefly derived from employment, or Jarvis's (1995, 50) claim that "men tend to have a slightly more instrumental attitude to education." Yet Ronayne (1999) suggests that the high proportion of men on employment-based programmes rather than educational programmes is simply due to Government policy and initiatives. He supports this argument by highlighting the limited resources devoted to adult education compared with expenditure on employment supports and vocational training (Ronayne, 1999). To sum up, Owens (2000, 5) posits his belief that the body of published research on adult participation in education in Ireland is scant. Even so the literature outlined here is corroborated by the Conference of Religious in Ireland (CORI) (2003), Denny and Harmon (2000), Whelan and Hannan (1999) and Breen et al., (1995), each of which claim that access to, and participation in, post-compulsory education in Ireland, is closely linked to socio-economic status. Furthermore in Chapter 5 it can be noted that work by Clancy (2001, 1995), Clancy and Wall (2000), Humphries and Jeffers (1999) and Mc Sorely (1997) indicates that home address, school type and location and pupil socio-economic backgrounds are critical determinants of educational outcomes and expectations.

To recap, both international and national literature suggests that there are socio-economic and cultural differences in patterns of participation in adult, further and higher education. International evidence that traditional non-participants resist the formal programs that are offered them can be gleaned from the 1995 International Adult Literacy Survey (OECD & Statistics Canada) as summarized in Quigley & Arrowsmith, (1997). Those that have benefited and gained from positive educational experiences in their past (i.e. those with high qualifications and high socio-economic status) being the main participants. This prompted McGivney (2002, 39) to suggest, "that affluence leads to learning rather than vice versa." In turn the influence of socio-economic, structural and psychological factors is so strong that some researchers claim that they are in themselves accurate predicators of an adult's learning trajectory (Gorard et al., 1998). Investigations into the

inter-connected factors of previous educational experiences, cultural and familial norms, the financial and structural costs, the actual provision available and its perceived relevance, have lead researchers to highlight a learning divide between participants and non-participants. Basically the division is seen to lie between the middle-class and the working class. Yet this divide is itself criticised on the grounds that it is an over-simplification and indeed a misrepresentation. For example Tight (1998, 113) believes that the divide is "between kinds of learning rather than between learners and non-learners." In a nutshell the learning divide should be viewed in terms of formal and informal learning rather than participation and non-participation. The false divide is based on an equally false dichotomy between participation in formal, skills-based programmes viewed as investment in human capital (Coffield, 1998) and participation in unstructured, informal learning embedded in the Lifeworld (Rockhill, 1982), Schuller (1998). Indeed as early as 1982 Rockhill was warning of this false divide suggesting that much research viewed participation "as a dichotomous event which does or does not take place, and then proceeds to categorise non-participants as non-learner" (Rockhill, 1982, 6).

Formal, informal and non-formal learning

This has lead to a new leaning in the literature towards attempts to define learning and places of learning and a new focus on non-participation and informal learning. This development seems all the more ironic in light of Tough's (1979) seminal work on self-directed learning, which has been criticised on the grounds that his findings were possibly an overestimation (Jarvis, 1995). Even so, Tough (1979) stressed that it was important to define learning in order to include all learning projects in which people might be engaged. Later he defined a learning project as "a highly deliberate effort; we define that as effort where more than half of the person's total motivation had to be learning and retaining certain definite knowledge or skill – so that less than half of the person's motivation can be pleasure or enjoyment" (Tough, 1993, 31). In terms of motivation he suggested "the most common motivation is some anticipated use or application of the knowledge and skill, while the less common is curiosity or puzzlement, or wanting to possess the knowledge for its own sake"

(Tough, 1993, 32). Again this suggestion will be teased out and related to my findings in Chapter 5.

Returning to non- participation in informal learning, in more recent years according to Field (1999, 11) the focus of much research has been on the idea that participation in adult learning by its very nature is a good thing. The subsequent themes of research fall under the categories of the negative (barriers to participation) and the positive (issues of motivation) (Field, 1999, 11). Indeed Atkin (2000, 255) goes even further and suggests that the rhetoric of participation and its associated discourse of lifelong learning have become so all-persuasive that participation could almost be considered as "a duty, a moral obligation for any responsible member of society". Field (1999) concurs claiming that adult learning and training has become almost compulsory while both Coffield (1998) and Tight (1998) see this compulsory learning as a new form of social control driven by the rhetoric of the learning society, financial incentives, as well as employer and social pressures. It would appear as discussed earlier in this chapter, that the rationale for increasing participation has more to do with globalisation than actually addressing the needs of the socially excluded non-participants (Stuart, 2000). As a result I believe that research must be refocused on the reasons for non-participation rather than the statistics of non-participation. The focus should not be on the human capital rationale for participation rather that of social capital and all aspects of informal learning (Field 1999, Tight 1998, McGivney 1998, 1999b). Without this refocusing from the dominant limited and limiting discourse of access and participation, research and debate will continue to be blinkered and non-participants will be asking "access to what and participation in what, and on whose terms?" (Crowther et al., 2000). If this is the case, research is in danger of becoming "over-paternalistic and prescriptive, if not patronizing" (Johnson, 2000, 21). Such concerns have developed in conjunction with a move to include a broader, looser, more informal definition of learning. In short participation research and literature has now come to focus on formal and informal learning in institutional and non-institutional settings each of which are set against a backdrop of social inclusion and exclusion.

What is interesting about the focus on informal learning is that once again it is ultimately concerned with motivation and the intrinsic values placed by an individual on learning. The oft-cited barriers to participation are mere ciphers for the values ascribed by the individual to learning and its expected outcomes. This is confirmed by Jonsson and Gahler (1996) who found that of people with objective barriers in terms of handicaps, young children, working hours and so on, as many participated in adult education as did not participate. Thus many people do not perceive a need for, or feel a desire to, participate in formal learning simply because of its low rate of return. For them the long-term benefits do not outweigh the short-term difficulties such as prohibitive costs, time constraints or negative family perceptions. That being the case, we must be restrained in moralising about non-participation and ascribing our middle-class values to everyone else. But the reality of life in the Western World is that education is seen as a basic tool to improve one's life chances and attain a more equitable share of resources. The problem is that many people have an aversion to using that tool even if they could grasp it freely. There is little doubt that those with higher levels of education have higher incomes, status, political clout, cultural capital and so on. Indeed the Irish Government clearly acknowledged this reality when it stated, "access in adult life to desirable employment and choices is closely linked to levels of educational attainment" (DES, 2000) and a quick look at the statistics confirms this. Fifty one percent of Ireland's short-term unemployed and just fewer than seventy-five percent of the long-term unemployed have less than post Junior Certificate level secondary level education (CORI, 2003, 109). This is more disappointing when we consider that forty-five percent of the Irish adult population has attained less than upper level secondary education (CORI, 2003, 108). The lack of which undermines their life chances.

Are we not thus compelled to ensure that all citizens can attain desirable employment and choices? Are we not obliged morally to ensure that all citizens come to realise that 'education is good for them and for society at large'? But of course by doing so are we not imposing our middle-class values on others? This dilemma seems to me to lie at the heart of all aspects of the participation and non-participation debate. What is the solution? Is there a solution that will equally take into account the perspectives of the

participants and non-participants, the researchers, the theorists and the policy makers? The rhetoric of widening access and increasing participation that has become flavour of the moment with Governments and academic institutions alike suggests that the solution is to provide access and increase motivation. Alternatively Field (1999, 6) calls for a rethinking of research into participation asking, "is it time to move beyond a simple binary approach (participant /non-participant)?" We must be wary of falling into the trap of considering negative attitudes to learning as some kind of misguided but easily rectified failing held commonly by the working class. We must not fail to recognise that what may manifest as negative attitude is well grounded in people's experiences of, and interaction with, a system that in reality has little to offer them. We must be aware that for many there is a great social capital to be gained from non-participation rather than from participation as is commonly held. In essence non-participants are engaging in self-exclusion. Thus it would seem that the challenge is to ensure that informal, non-institutional learning is as significant a component of research and policy as formal, institution-based learning. A suggestion considered further in the last chapter of this thesis. Meanwhile we must also continue to truly widen access for those that desire it. Lastly by returning to the dominant discourse of lifelong learning as discussed earlier in the chapter, we must remember that it leads to highly individualised, economically orientated participation while learning for democracy and community may get ignored (Coffield, 1999, Foley 1993). Thus it is imperative that non-participants are not socially excluded even further. This is crucial for prisoners who as we have seen are excluded from practically all aspects of Irish life, yet can readily pursue education while in custody.

To summarise this section of the literature review we can see that early research into the motivations of adult learners attempted to provide a typology of learners but it soon became clear this was no simple task. Different types of people were motivated by different factors and sometimes by the same factors. The more comprehensive and all embracing the research became, the more types of adult learners and motivational factors were discovered. As the research began to examine the driving forces behind the ever-widening motivational factors it emerged that a complex mix of socio-economic, structural and psychological triggers were in

operation. Having discovered that certain sectors of society were excluded from adult education the research focus shifted to discovering the reasons behind this fact. As we have seen there have been increasing attempts to define and understand the phenomenon of non-participation as voiced by non-participants and as situated in the lives of non-participating adults themselves. This research has seen a move away from a focus on singular deterrents and stereotypical learner characteristics to a more robust conceptualisation of the complexities of the sociological realities and dispositional barriers that are expressed by those adults that refuse to engage in formal learning. The subject of non-participation by adult learners had become of more concern to interested parties than that of motivation. Of course it is important to remember that the two are inextricably bound together and one cannot ask why do such patterns persist without also asking what is motivating the participants to participate and the non-participants to decline? This is why I have attempted in this research to examine participation patterns in tandem with participant motivations.

Comparable research

In terms of analogous studies and close comparability, Clancy and Wall (2000), Clancy (2001, 1995), Lynch (1997), O'Mahony (1997a, 1993) and Forster (1990, 1981) are of particular relevance and each has framed aspects of this research process. In my attempts to establish a pattern of participation for third level prison students I have drawn heavily on the rationale behind and the research methods employed in Clancy's (1995) Access to College: Patterns of Continuity and Change, Clancy's (2001) College Entry in Focus: A Fourth National Survey of Access to Higher Education and Clancy and Wall's (2000) Social Background of Higher Education Entrants. These studies provide a clear picture of the historical development of participation in higher education and establish a national pattern of participation by examining the variables of gender, age, field of study, socio-economic background and educational background. They proved to be a valuable yardstick by which I explored the prison situation and my findings are compared and contrasted with them throughout Chapter 5. Lynch (1997) outlines rates of participation by mature students in third level education and provides a useful profile of mature students in Ireland as

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mentioned earlier in this chapter. Given that a major consideration of my study concerns the possible role of education in fostering social inclusion, research by O'Mahony (1997a) and (1993) proved invaluable. As the title suggests, Mountjoy Prisoners: A Sociological and Criminological Profile (O'Mahony, 1997a), presents a clear and readily comparable study of the population in Ireland's largest prison and builds on his earlier work, Crime and Punishment in Ireland (1993). Mountjoy is the prison in which I carried out my initial pilot study and within which the small group of students with which I worked collaboratively are based. Consequently my research findings are compared with the findings of both of these studies throughout Chapter 5.

Before concluding this literature review one particularly salient piece of research must be considered. In 1981 Forster published his work The Higher Education of Prisoners and developed it further in a paper published in the Yearbook of Correctional Education (1990). To date this is the most comprehensive research carried out and published in the British Isles on the subject of third level prison education. Accordingly it is the template by which much of my findings are measured. Forster (1981) provides a typology of higher education prison students, classifying them into four distinct groupings. The first group was comprised of the previously educationally disadvantaged; those that would be classified generally as second chance students. The second group needed to change their qualifications because their offence militates against them returning to the profession or job they had before imprisonment. The third group were also previously well qualified but are not limited by their offence in returning to their former careers. Forster (1981) felt that a fourth group warranted a classification of their own on the grounds that generally they were younger but more pertinently, their prison sentence had interrupted their academic career or expectations of an academic career.

To arrive at this typology of prison participants, Forster (1981, 1990) examined the motivations of the prison students for participation in higher education. He divided this examination into a series of subheadings dealing with the initial motivation for study, the continuing motivation, the rationale behind selecting a particular course and the rewards or the outcomes

expected by the prisoners from participation (Forster, 1990, 170). In general he found that the initial motivations, the continuing motivations and expected outcomes proved fluid and dynamic throughout a prisoner's academic career and varied considerable between the four groupings. For example the initial motivations of the previously well-qualified group were clear-cut and positive. This is to be expected, as they knew what they want from education and how to get it just as they had done in the past. The previously educationally disadvantaged group were motivated more by boredom and attempts to break free of the constraints of prison life rather than actively seeking an educational opportunity. It must be stressed that all of the prisoners were initially motivated by the boredom factor while simultaneously wanting to "avoid some aspect of prison life" (Forster, 1990, 17). As they progressed with their academic careers, changes in perceptions began to emerge between the groups. The previously educationally disadvantaged began to realise the possibilities afforded by education and spoke of new horizons and fresh discoveries while the previously educationally advantaged tended not to display changes in their personal values. It will be noted that in this respect significant parallels with Foster's findings were discovered in this study.

2.5 Summary of Chapter

The Chapter opened with an examination of the changing discourse from a broad view of adult education to the prevalent, narrower definition of lifelong learning. The cause, course and consequences of this changing discourse were discussed and evidence gleaned from national and international policy documents of the true intent behind the changing perspectives. I speculated that the emergent discourse of lifelong learning is based on a desire to increase the economic stability and viability of the state rather than widen social inclusion among its citizens. The chapter proceeded to examine the branch of adult education that is prison education. In so doing I asserted that Irish prison education is based on a humanist view of adult education, and is thus chiefly concerned with the holistic personal development of the prisoner through the process of self-

actualisation. This humanist philosophy sees education as a key element of human development and considers personal development to be an aim, a process and a result of adult education. I suggested that while these sentiments are admirable, this view of the role and possibility of prison education is too narrow as it overly emphasises changing the individual prisoner while ignoring the simple fact that the society to which he will return remains unchanged. I advocated that a more effective approach would lie in a redefinition of prison education along the ideals of critical education. This call for a more radical vision for Irish prison education was developed within an in-depth discussion of what is meant by critical education.

The chapter concluded with a review of the literature associated with the issues of participation and motivation in adult education. A complex mix of socio-economic, structural and psychological factors was seen to work to determine participation and non-participation levels. The review indicated a move away from creating a typology of adult learners to an emphasis on issues of participation. This in turn led to a refocusing on inequality of access and non-participation. A consensus was reached that in general the middle-class participate, while the working class do not, and this in turn triggered the notion of a learning divide based on socio-economic background. This over-simplistic view ignores the fact that large swathes of the adult population have pragmatic and rational reasons for non-participation and many attempts to include them are concerned more with national economic competitiveness then with possible benefits that may accrue to the individual. The chapter concluded with a summary of the most salient piece of research carried out to date on the issue of prisoner participation in third level education. The significance of that for both Irish prison education and this research is discussed in the next chapter as are other relevant theoretical perspectives to have emerged from within this literature review.

Chapter 3
ISSUES TO EMERGE FROM LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Introduction

This chapter breaks into three interrelated sections; adult education and lifelong learning, prison education and penal policy, and motivation and participation. These sections are not to be understood in sequential order rather they deal arbitrarily with the varying issues to have emerged from the literature review. Each issue is related to the specificity of the context of Irish prisons.

3.2 Changing Discourse of Adult Learning

The trawl through national and international Government publications indicates that the economy and its mantra of globalisation has colonised the concept of adult education. It has done so by replacing the broad ideals of adult education with a narrower rationale for lifelong learning and inserting the latter into public discourse. In so doing the foundations of the new discourse are set in stone. It is more than a mere change of nomenclature, it a change of perspective, ideology and direction. Consequently the term lifelong learning has become overused and misused but rarely examined and debated. Adult education and lifelong learning is threatened as value free education especially in the areas of IT, and skills based courses has come to dominate investment in the education of adults. Over-investment in jobs and skills training in comparison to areas that promote emancipatory learning is clear from an overview of policy. Adult education that encourages critical thinking, reflection, widening the frames of reference of its participants and social capital has been sidelined in favour of that which promotes human capital. In the reviewed publications the acknowledgment that lifelong learning can promote social inclusion is contrasted with the reality of increased investment in value-free adult education. According to Thompson (1997, 21) adult education should promote "really useful knowledge, the development of critical thinking, the recognition of human agency, political growth and the confidence to challenge what is generally taken to be inevitable". Funding for courses that venture into such territory is limited. While notions of self-direction, the centrality of experience,

collaborative learning and empowerment have been assimilated into the discourse and policy documents of lifelong learning, they serve as a guide for practitioners rather than providing a librating purpose for the learner. When more diverse forms of adult education and training are equally funded, then the following quotation from the Green Paper on Adult Education (1998, 20) can be taken seriously. "Social inclusion requires a capacity to make, or at least influence, decisions that impact on one's current and future lifestyle. Acquiring this capacity involves access to information and an understating of the nature of communities, groups and individuals to participate in this way has formed much of the adult education agenda for the past 20 years" (DES, 1998, 20). It would seem to me that acquiring this capacity would ensure increased social capital, a factor largely ignored in policy. In spite of the rhetoric Irish adult education and lifelong learning policy is neither enabling nor indeed inspirational, and is indicative of the discernable discursive shift away from the notion of adult education to one of lifelong learning. The lack of any realistic role in Irish adult education policy for issues of social justice makes it is even more imperative that prison educators take up the clarion call to realise that reality.

3.3 Adult Education and Prison Education

The overview of prison education literature raised some fundamental epistemological, ontological and political questions over the nature of prison education theory. The lack of a clearly defined theoretical framework for Irish prison education has lead me to suggest that one is needed. It is needed to help practitioners and learners focus on the role of education in the prison system and their position to that role and within that system. Humanist rhetoric has much to offer prison education. Its emphasis on the individual rather than the subject matter or curriculum will encourage more prisoners to partake of education. Yet it reflects the notion that "the etiology of crime lies in the individual rather than in the social structure" (Sbarbaro, 1996, 145). Because its threat to educational autonomy is reflected in attempts to legitimise prison education as based in the moral

development of prisoners, prison educators must be circumspect of their role in that process. Humanist adult education has the same basic principles as the social and cultural values of western democracy and is thus bound to appeal to a prison system operating within that setting. For this reason humanist rhetoric will continue to underlie the theory and practice of prison education unless deliberate attempts are made to review the matter. To counterbalance this inevitably prison educators must be aware that "entry into the prison milieu transforms the fundamental character of education" (Sbarbaro, 1996, 145). The basic premise and values of prison education, regardless of the particular philosophy of adult education to which it aspires, are subjugated by the penal system in which it operates. This is why I am suggesting Irish prison education must take on the principles and criteria of a more radical humanism, in particular critical education theories. The onus is on the service to "provide a space for forms of radical and emancipatory politics associated with new social movements and issues of gender, race, ethnicity, and sexuality, which provide the possibility for practices free from the totalising discourse of the traditional left" (Edwards & Usher, 2001, 274). This is why I call for a profound re-conceptualisation of Irish prison education, one that involves a transition to a broader concept based on the ideals of critical theory. One that promotes social capital over human capital. Thus a new conceptual framework is advocated; one appropriate to the realisation that prison education is subjected to higher powers and perpetuates an imbalance of such power.

Foucault's (1991) theories on prisons as arenas of power production serve as an illustration of how power is normalised and formalised in society. He claims that prisons "serve as a historical background to various studies of the power of normalization and the formation of knowledge in modern society" (Foucault, 1991, 308). He explains that through the mechanisms of normalisation, or the normalising gaze (Foucault, 1980), it is deemed fit to imprison people and this "succeeds in making the power to punish natural and legitimate, in lowering at least the threshold of tolerance to penalty" (Foucault, 1991, 301). It is ironic that he talks so disparagingly of normalisation as so many prison educationists suggest that prison education can bring about normalisation. They believe this will occur by viewing the prisoner as a student first and foremost, thus by providing him with

educational opportunities equivalent to the mainstream this will lessen the damaging effects of imprisonment. But is this not shortsighted; are we not normalising prison life and imprisonment as much as the process? According to Foucault we can counterbalance this if we "learn self-discipline, undertake self-surveillance, and exercise self-censorship, there is little need for dominant groups to force ideas or behaviours on us" (Brookfield, 2001, 17). As prison educators we can begin the process by engaging in critical education and redefining the type of education we offer our students. An appropriate re-conceptualisation would stem from the notion of conscientisation as the ultimate function of education for the oppressed but I would suggest that a broader retrospection is necessary.

This re-conceptualisation of Irish prison education must have its basis in critical theory as developed by Habermas (1987) as discussed earlier. He was concerned with the social construction of knowledge and advocated collaborative dialogue as communicative action and praxis as a dialectical process. It is this emphasis on the ability of education to enhance the individual's communicative competence that allows for collective action. It adds credence to Freire's normative claims for an emancipatory pedagogy for the oppressed. Therefore social theory has relevance for any educationalist concerned with issues of social exclusion and consciousness-raising. It enables the educator and students clarify the dominant ideas, frameworks of analysis and forms of discourse that shape their view of the world. It allows them recognise and understand the social, political and cultural controls and influences that are buttressing and constructing their experiences. The facility for ideology critique that stems from critical social theory can reveal the constructed realities according to Gramsci's (1995) analysis of hegemony. Within this thesis I take ideology critique to refer to the process by which one can come to recognise, understand and challenge the dominant ideologies and discourses that shape our hegemonic assumptions. These hegemonic assumptions determine our way of knowing, experiencing and judging what is real and true. Ideology critique not only reveals how these assumptions are socially constructed but also most importantly how they can be dismantled.

Theories of prison education should be primarily concerned with issues such as the neutrality of education, socialisation, knowledge formation and power relations. Prison educators and students should question the dominant cultural values and hegemonic processes embedded in their teaching and learning. In so doing they not only move beyond the humanist view of education but also a Marxists analysis of education. Critical theorists view adult education as a cultural field that frequently invalidates the values of the marginalized. This re-emphasis will help shift the balance and allow the marginalized articulate their needs and possibly realise communicative action. It is the underestimation of the power of adult learning to reproduce the dominant discourse that needs to be addressed. This lack of recognition of the value-ladenness of education in a field of education at the mercy of the larger penal system must be highlighted.

Prison education is not like adult education on the outside, it lacks that independence. It operates within the shadow of a penal system directed by the whims and caprices of a fickle society and governed by politically decided mandates. I agree with Dinneen (1995) that prison education is different, but I believe it is so primarily because as prison educators we are in a precarious ideological position. We are by our very presence colluding with the state's apparatus of control. Yet many subscribe to a theory of adult education that enables our students' transform their lives and overthrow that hegemony. This double standard, this inconsistency, must be addressed. We must expose our theoretical perspectives to ideology critique because after all this is what we espouse for our students. We must debate such matters and recognise the explicitly political character of prison education. Consequently the Irish prison education service must set clear and unambiguous mandates and directions for itself particularly in light of recent developments in the wider world of adult education. As we have seen such developments veer towards the mega trends of competition, privatisation, standardisation and individualism; concepts associated with globalisation. If we accept that "schooling is being redefined through a corporate ideology which stresses the primacy of choice over community, competition over cooperation, and excellence over equity" (Giroux, 1996. ix), then we must accept that such globalisation has little to offer the prison student. A more relevant approach is one that recognises the benefits of

social capital over human capital. Having called for a redefinition of Irish prison education I am aware of Lynch's (1999, 4) warning that "theories of egalitarian-focused change, ones which are grounded in the institutional and political structures of educational reality, can be successfully developed only in a dialogical context." It is thus necessary that prison students be actively involved in any debate carried out on their behalf and this is why we must invite students' views and work collaboratively with them.

3.4 Prison Education and Penal Policy

In light of the changes within the IPS as outlined in Chapter 1, the issues raised above have a particular resonance for Irish prison educators and their students. The creation of an independent agency bearing sole responsibility for our prisons has led to far-reaching organisational and managerial changes. It appears to me that a consequence of these changes is the rise of a new dominant discourse of regime management. This discourse is based on the notion of 'addressing offending behaviour' and correcting the 'criminogenic factors' apparently inherent in the prisoner. Its allied view of the prisoner as something broken in need of fixing, as an object in need of treatment, is a regressive step reminiscent of previously discredited notions of imprisonment. I believe that this discourse must be challenged because it is intrinsically limited and limiting. The power of discourse lies in its exclusions. A discourse defines what is appropriate and that which is deemed inappropriate is then systematically marginalized, silenced and repressed. Prison educators must be vigilant and ensure that we are not elided now that the rise of the emergent discourse appears to have shifted the ground rules. Increasingly prison education is being asked to defend itself in response to the question, how is it addressing offending behaviour? It is no longer deemed acceptable or apt to suggest that the question itself is misguided.

Without resorting to a siege mentality it is important nonetheless that prison educators are aware of the possible negative effects of the emergent discourse. It is essential that Irish prison education affirms a clear mandate

by rationalising its aims and objectives. Again I am advocating that such a mandate be based in the ideals of critical education as this has much to offer the prison student, more in fact than any offence-focused programme. Its potential lies in its concern with a significant change in capacity and understanding through three interrelated processes; the process by which adults question and then replace an assumption that up to then had been held uncritically, the process by which adults develop alternative perspectives on previously taken for granted ideas and beliefs and the process by which adults come to recognise and reframe their culturally induced dependency roles. In short it is the process of assessing our assumptions and presuppositions and in so doing it challenges preconceptions, prejudices, indoctrination and fatalism. Thus we can recognise its potential for prison students but it also has much to offer the prison educator. Because critical reflection, conscientization and transformation lies at its core, it forces also the teacher to question what it is they are doing? This is a positive move not just because it can dispel complacency but because increasingly we are being called upon to rationalise both practice and policy and thus critical reflexivity must be an essential element of our daily endeavours. Furthermore this call for critical reflexivity is based on the view of the prisoner as a reflective being, a responsible subject rather than an object of treatment, thus it is incumbent on the educator to 'practice what they preach'. This is why it is vital that prison educators be aware of what it is we are doing, why we are doing it and how best to do it? Without this awareness we are not in a position to really meet the needs of our students or increase participation among the wider prison population.

3.5 Participation and Non-participation

The review suggests that to date the focus of participation and motivation research has been on individual consciousness and the intrinsic interest value of learning. This is useful if it concludes that social capital is central to promoting the social and cultural dimensions to motivations for learning. Yet I would suggest more research is needed on the extrinsic utility value of learning as well as the societal processes and structures in operation. This is

essential in view of my previous comments on the changing views on the role of adult learning in society. It is necessary to determine if the dominant discourse of learning for economic competitiveness is trickling down and influencing the motivations of participants. In Chapter 5 we will see if the dominant discourse has impacted on the motivations of prison students. The implications of any such findings will have a direct relevance for the type of regime and education we provide for our prisoners.

The most contentious issue to develop from participation and motivation research has been that of non-participation. The lack of debate on lifelong learning has profound implications for issues of participation and motivation, how can you define learners and non-learners if you fail to define learning? As seen the majority of citizens choose not to participate in adult learning. Jonsson and Gähler (1996, 38) concluded that "instead of barriers that might have to do with cost, lack of time and so on, it is probably differences in expected rewards that can explain why some choose to participate while others remain outside." In short it has to do with the expected rewards from participation. This has lead to the contention that we should not moralise about non-participation or try to impose our middle-class values on non-participants. This view has its detractors, as there is little doubt that adult learning has an immense benefit in terms of income, status, occupation, political efficacy, cultural competence and similar payoffs. We are faced thus with a dilemma. On the one hand we advocate equality for all; on the other hand the education system perpetuates inequality. bell hooks (1994) claims that the most obvious silence around class inequalities is evident in educational settings and this is confirmed by the literature review of the previous chapter. Also we have a policy dilemma in that while widening participation is a stated aim of our Government, the reality is that participation in some particular forms of learning are favoured and financially supported over others. Similarly we have a political dilemma, how far can the state intervene in the lives of those citizens that self-exclude? It would seem to me that the solution might lie in considering dispositional barriers as just that, a barrier like any other institutional one. It is not insurmountable but is equally pliable if there is the political will to tackle it. The state cannot change the minds of its citizens' by deceiving them with rhetorical flourishes or insidiously

inculcating its dominant discourse. However it can change the system to develop forms of education that actually serve the interests of all its citizens, forms of education that are based on the foundation of authentic human needs and social capital. Advocating the social capital to be gained from participation draws attention away from the focus on participant deficits and promotes instead existing local and community resources. When policy directions are no longer concerned with consumers but refocus on citizens then perhaps those citizens will value education. A more in-depth debate on such issues is beyond the remit of this thesis but it does have relevance as the findings indicate that the prison situation reflects the wider community in its profile of non-participants in third level education.

3.6 Summary of Chapter

This chapter brings together the theoretical considerations framing this research and relates them to some of the salient issues to have emerged from the literature review. In brief it suggested that the changing discourse of adult learning has little to offer the Irish prison student. Consequently it is imperative that Irish prison education be clear as to its philosophy and potential. It was suggested that the most appropriate type of adult education to offer prisoners is one based on a critical education approach. Such an approach not only meets the needs of the student body but also promotes critical reflexivity among the teaching staff so that they can readily rationalise policy and practice. Because the IPS is undergoing a period of transition and flux, and also because one of the basic objectives of prison education is to widening participation, any such rationalisation is crucial. The chapter concluded by discussing some of the complexities and dilemmas surrounding the issue of participation in adult education. Simply widening access in the hope of increasing participation is not enough. It is important that the motivation for participation and non-participation be understood and respected while learning opportunities are developed that meet student expectations. The National Economic and Social Forum (2002, 148) claims that a survey undertaken in one of the Dublin prisons found that prisoners had "aspirations to have a good job, wanting to break

the cycle of poverty, addiction and crime and to make something of themselves on release." If this is so, can increased participation in adult education facilitate this as is commonly suggested?. More importantly how can the IPS respond? In the concluding chapter of this thesis recommendations are outlined that address these questions.

Chapter 4 THE RESEARCH PROCESS

4.1 Introduction

Drawing on the five phases that define the qualitative research process as identified by Denzin and Lincoln (2000, 20), I have divided this chapter under five analogous headings; the researcher as a multicultural subject, theoretical paradigms and perspectives, research strategies, methods of collection and analysis, and interpretation and presentation. In hindsight I realise that it is also the well-established format I had instinctively undertaken when carrying out the research. While being aware of the comment from Edwards et al., (2002, 2) that such well-established formats for presenting research can "work to erase other insider stories that might be told", I feel that constant reflexivity towards 'the text I collected and the text I created' can somewhat mitigate against this dilemma. The issue of reflexivity is discussed later in this chapter. Each of the sections is formulated in such a way as to answer the questions listed below. I have done so in an attempt to provide a rationale for, and an examination of, the substantive issues of methodological choice and use of research instruments employed throughout my research project. Each of these questions is considered in a sequential manner in the remaining pages of this chapter. In which research paradigm is the methodology located? What is the rationale behind selecting this paradigm? Why choose these particular procedures and instruments? How can the chosen methodology ensure validity and reliability? What procedures for data analysis are envisaged and why? How can such procedures provide a basis for theory building?

I begin by locating this study within the critical research paradigm and stress that the aims and ideals of collaborative and emancipatory research have heavily influenced all aspects of the study. I provide a comprehensive rationale for this choice of paradigm and highlight those elements of other research paradigms and methodological assumptions that I have rejected or favoured in the course of this work. I provide also an outline of the varying theoretical and methodological presuppositions that I believe have influenced me as an educationalist and in turn as an educational researcher. I have done so in light of Oppenheim's (1992, 9) assertion that the quality of the design of the research tools will frequently depend on the quality of "research conceptualisation." Thus I felt it necessary to include a detailed

discussion on the issues outlined above. I continue with an overview of the research tools employed in the study and again provide a rationale for their inclusion. Judgements relating to validity, reliability and generalisability are discussed and their application to the chosen methodologies resolved. An account of, and rationale for, the method of data analysis used is developed. The chapter concludes with an explanation of how this provided a base for theory formation and the recommendations specified in subsequent chapters.

4.2 The Researcher and the Researched as Multicultural Subjects

This research is postmodern in its influences, qualitative in its approach and falls within the critical research paradigm. My perception of postmodern educationalists can be summarised as those that question the value of particular forms of education, usually in terms of concerns about the nature of knowledge. Such educationalists explore the possibility of restructuring the curricula, organisation, policy and power relations in order to make the learning process more 'real' to the learners. In a similar way postmodern researchers base their approach on issues of equality and collaboration, on questioning the power relationships, the control, and influences inherent in the research process. Denzin and Lincoln (2000, 19) expressively suggest that postmodern researchers believe there is "no clear window into the inner life of an individual, any gaze is always filtered through the lens of language, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity." The idea of the objective, detached researcher examining the students as mere 'objects' has been eschewed in favour of the researcher as a socially engaged and political actor. Such a researcher recognises that their 'subjects' are not a homogeneous grouping but one of varied social differences and diversities. This heterogeneity is understood in terms of power relations, of domination and subjugation hence the previous reference to a political actor. I would like to think that I am such a researcher. I believe that as a researcher I am indeed a multicultural subject, one that confronts the contested ethics and politics of research. It should be noted that while I am concerned with issues of power in research this does not mean that I intend to use this

concern to avoid critique. I firmly agree with Smith and Deemer (2000), that we cannot eliminate power from our judgements, it is always and ever present but instead we should be concerned with the "responsible use of power while avoiding its excesses" (Smith and Deemer, 2000, 887).

In this particular study a dialogic process is strived for, whereby the researcher and participants deliberate on their experiences and possible motivations. The objective being that all those involved gain greater understandings of the personal and social context of third level prison students and arrive at a shared understanding of their varying motivations for studying at this level while in custody. Thus I hope that the study can function as a forum through which the voices of the students will permeate. While I am acutely aware that the latter objective is a highly contentious one and maybe even futile in light of Scott's (1996, 179) assertion that the textuality of research ensures that the participants are always objectified (and hence deprived of a voice) regardless of the researcher's emancipatory intentions. I am also aware that on a more basic level there is an inherent danger that I could possibly eradicate the students' voices by attempting to speak about them and for them. Yet I feel that this can be somewhat lessened if at all times I attempt constant reflexivity and stress that the conclusions drawn are my viewpoints, and highly subjective ones at that. They are subjective in the classic postmodern tradition that they develop from my conscious and subconscious values and interpretations, my theoretical viewpoints and domain assumptions. By domain assumptions I am referring to that identified by Lynch (1999, 5) as being "non-theoretical beliefs and assumptions developed by our own personal unique life experiences." More specifically our personal set of values and beliefs are often subconscious and thus not open to identification. However Lynch (1999: 5) does state that we can consciously identify "the parameters of our intellectual domain, we can at least identify some of the limiting conditions of our own analysis." Such internalised domain assumptions will undoubtedly influence the categories of paradigmatic allegiances to which every researcher adheres. Consequently they will influence the researcher's acceptance or rejection of theories that emerge within the research process. Conversely the researcher's paradigmatic assumptions can be thus developed from their theoretical viewpoints on particular issues. I think it is

important to suggest that if one concurs with this notion, then one must also agree with the idea that those being researched, the 'subjects', do not necessarily have objective-free and consciously direct access to their own domain assumptions and theoretical viewpoints. Thus the fear of taking the 'voices away' could be allayed by proposing that the researcher is in fact highlighting the participants' underlying assumptions and viewpoints. In this way they are merely clarifying the participants' perceptions and identifying the researcher's own perception of what the voices are saying. Ultimately in any qualitative research project the subjects are the co-creators of the knowledge created and the theories developed. Thus they have control over the definitions and interpretations of their experiences and viewpoints no matter how subconscious their own understanding of those might be, or how tentative their control over the interpretations of others.

Undoubtedly I hold varying theoretical and methodological presuppositions that might be apparent throughout this report but that I hope are not obtrusive. Denzin and Lincoln (2000, 18) claim that "the gendered, multiculturally situated researcher approaches the world with a set of ideas" that predefine and configure each aspect of the research process. By outlining what I perceive to be my set of ideas, my beliefs on ontology, epistemology and research methodology, I am attempting to ensure that the research process is subjected to critique and investigation. This has two purposes. It serves to fulfil my belief that critical reflexivity should be an essential element of educational research and it returns to the dilemma raised earlier in reference to Edwards et al., (2002, 2). By attempting to identify my set of research beliefs I am firmly locating my study within the critical research paradigm and suggesting that it is thus postmodern in its stance.

Theoretical paradigms and perspectives.

In order to rationalise my chosen research paradigm, I should outline briefly those politico-cultural leanings, those theoretical paradigms that have influenced and been influenced by my educational and research interests and experiences to date. In doing so I am not attempting an autoethnographical study. By autoethnography, I am referring to in depth

research that attempts to explore how the researcher's life histories permeate and colour ethnographic research in order to convey not so much the facts of the experience but rather the meaning attached to the experience as outlined by Ellis and Bochner (2000, 751). Rather I am hoping that the emergence of my methodological assumptions will help conceptualise the entire research process as suggested by Creswell (1998, 77). Having worked as a teacher in the field of adult learning and prison education for fifteen years, this research study is influenced by those ideologies and viewpoints that reflect on my understanding of both adult and prison education. Just as no researcher can be completely detached from their subjects, communities or culture (Hitchcock and Hughes 1995), no teacher can be either. Theorists such as Freire (1972) and Mezirow (2000, 1998, 1997,) are examples of adult educationalists that have influenced me over the years. Freire's (1972, 1987) ideas on education as conscientisation, as a possible agent for change and transformative action, tie in with postmodern views of knowledge and its potential to influence change. Furthermore his ideas on the power relationships perpetuated in and by the dominant educational discourse reflect in a similar manner postmodernist views not only on educational content but also educational relationships and power struggles. Mezirow's (2000, 1998, 1997) view that the educational process is best understood by examining how those involved perceive and understand the process and their relationship to that process has a direct bearing on my choice of research paradigm. His concept of transformative learning growing from critical reflection by developing thoughtful awareness of how presuppositions constrain the way we perceive, understand and react to our experiences and the world, has as much to offer the educational researcher as the prison student. As an educationalist I am interested in encouraging reflection and reflexivity among my students. This research and narrative attempts to mirror that reflexivity and become truly reflective.

Having been cultivated within the framework of the critical learning tradition, my view of adult and prison learning is one that acknowledges the concept of teacher as facilitator. Facilitators do not direct rather they assist learners to attain a state of self-actualisation by fostering a spirit of critical reflection based on praxis. My understanding of praxis is closely related to that of Carr (1993, 173) who proposes "it is a form of reflective action

which can itself transform the theory which guides it". McNiff et al., (1996) also provide a salient conception of my view of praxis:

> "Praxis is informed, committed action that gives rise to knowledge rather than just successful action. It is informed because other people's views are taken into account. It is committed and intentional in terms of values that have been examined and can be argued. It leads to knowledge from and about educational practice" McNiff et al., 1996, 8.

Thus facilitators and learners collaborate in a continual process of action, reflection on action, collaborative analysis of action, new action and further reflection along the lines attributed to Schon (1987). He suggests that practitioners develop a sense of knowing-in-action that generates reflection-in-action which in turn feeds into the growth of a body of skill, wisdom and experience (Schon, 1987). Such perceptions of the educationist and the educational researcher in turn provides the foundations for Kemmis's (1993, 182) view of "informed, committed action: praxis", and action research as "an embodiment of democratic principles in research" applied to praxis. He concludes that such intuitive insights are essential and must form the basis of action research (Kemmis, 1993). The weakness of this argument lies in the proposition that while the accumulated intuitive insights would indeed be of immense benefit to those seeking to offer or develop a similar programme, the criteria used for making evaluative judgments are likely to have limited potential for replication because they are the product of individual preferences and contextual variables. Thus by being overly situational I feel that the validity of much action research can be called into question. Consequently the limitations of such a research process for this study lies with my desire to compare the prison context with the mainstream and I feel that a purely action research study would unduly shift that focus.

Returning to my stated theoretical perspectives, if we concede that the facilitator's aim in fostering critical reflection is the nurturing of self-directed empowered adults, then their objective is to generate a realization in their learners that the bodies of knowledge, accepted truths, commonly held values, and customary behaviours which make up their world, are contextually and culturally constructed. As this ideology influences my practice as a teacher it will influence also my practice as an educational

researcher. While Hammersley (1993, 222), expresses doubt as to the feasibility and applicability of this view of "learning as inquiry", I still feel it has much to offer me as a practitioner. He contests the view of the teacher as facilitator by highlighting the difficulty in minimizing the difference in role between teacher and learner; likewise he feels that the teacher is automatically 'an authority' in that they control the parameters of the learning process and thus he goes on to question the openness and democratic nature of inquiry learning. He is resistant to critical research as being similarly ideologically biased in its treatment of data among other things (Hammersley 1993). Even so my observations and experiences force me to favour emancipatory research with its basis in ideology critique. This approach spreads ownership and control of praxis and research across the participant group. It is emancipatory in that it allows the group to free themselves from the restrictions and dictates of outside influences and irrelevant contexts. This allows the researcher and the subject to become equal and active members and creates the conditions for collaborative research. Before discussing this particular research process, I should return to the dilemma of possibly muffling rather than echoing my subjects' voices as I suggested that some form of critical research (if not emancipatory research) can resolve that dilemma and construe the theoretical paradigms and perspective influencing this research process.

Rationale for paradigm selection

The premise behind my choice of critical research paradigm is the belief that social investigation is not a neutral process. This belief calls into question the power relations inherent in any research process and compels me to return to the aforementioned dilemma. For me this dilemma is further compounded by the fact that academic status bestows public legitimacy on the formulation of theory. As Lynch (1999, 53) states, "it is only those who speak in the language and voice of the established paradigm who will be heard." Until prison students are credentialised and thus bestowed public legitimacy their voices will rarely permeate through to the establishment. Of course one such way to bestow public legitimacy on prison students is through the attainment of third level awards. The irony of the situation is not lost on me. After all in the absence of direct students' voices the

usefulness of this study as a conduit for the voiceless should not be diminished. Yet postmodernists, feminists and Marxists alike will readily testify to the supposition that ones identity is inextricably bound up with ones educational status among other things. Hence the working class prisoner who gains a degree is suddenly in danger of entering a strange twilight world. Generally he is not fully accepted by those who view him as a reformed ex-criminal but also not fully accepted by those who view him as a genuine third level student while simultaneously being no longer accepted totally by his non-graduate criminal peers[6]. This is similar to Schuller's (1998) contention that someone who acquires educational qualifications risks separation from the community. The belief that ones social class identity is automatically changed through participation in higher education feeds into the irony mentioned before. Should a working class prisoner who has gained a degree carry out similar research in the future, their perspectives and visions can be called into question just as can mine, the middle-class academic. It would be enlightening to see just how qualitatively different similar research carried out by a prisoner would be to this study?

Gergen and Gergen (2000) raise some interesting questions concerning identifying just who the author and the participant truly are in any research piece. Suggesting that while it may be evident that each individual participant is polyvocal, the author of the research is the coordinator of the voices and thus the ultimate arbiter of what to write/speak (Gergen and Gergen, 2000, 1028). They conclude that a new research relationship is the way forward. A relationship that facilitates the participants as "cultural

[6] This anomaly is best illustrated by the following quotation from one of the students interviewed as part of this research. On finishing a prison sentence he completed two years of a chemical engineering degree in Trinity College Dublin before returning to prison on a new sentence. Reflecting on this time at university he states, "there was a social element to not fitting in, the course I chose is essentially training to become a high-level management/executive type person. I was never going to succeed at this level even if I was highly successful academically. Too much of a culture shock in leaving prison and starting at university, I suffered a lot because of this and felt no matter what I would never shed the prison yard mentality." What is interesting about his quotation is that it is the individual's perception of himself, rather than the perception of others, that supports my supposition. McMahon (1997) a mainstream mature student echoes the perception of the prison student, "certain areas of knowledge are regarded as more important than others. In Ireland, these are the areas that suit the middle-class ethos. As a consequence, people like myself who may have obtained access in a formal sense are still marginalised within the third-level institution. For me, this marginalisation was more to do with my class background than with the fact that I was a mature student."

insiders", and replace "re/search with re/present" is the way forward (Gergen and Gergen, 2000, 1042). I agree with this conceptualisation and would suggest that throughout this research study I wanted to represent some form of situated knowledge that presents some sense of a truth located within a particular community at a particular time. While I accept that this raises once again the contentious issue of voice and validity, I feel that this would lead to productive dialogue until such a time as prisoners are afforded the opportunity to carry out their own research. This can be pitted against Scott and Usher's (1996, 29) proposition that there is "neither an originary point of knowledge nor a final interpretation." If we concur then neither the prisoner nor the researcher can legitimately paint the complete picture. Indeed I would suggest that merely sketching the picture will suffice; with the viewers' interpretations determining its truth and value. Pring (2000, 114) suggests rather philosophically " that the pursuit of truth makes sense without the guarantee of ever having attained it." Thus perhaps the best I can hope for is that the spoken texts of the participants in tandem with the written text of the researcher constructs a reflective academic text located in a particular context and at a particular time.

Returning to emancipatory research, many could suggest that it is the solution to the dilemma of voice and validity. It could be the solution in that its acknowledgment of context, its emphasis on allowing participants set the investigative agenda and research foci, and its concern that the conclusions drawn will be disseminated clearly, should allow the subjects to participate equally and make their voices heard by becoming practical theorists. Moreover as emancipatory research is concerned with reforming existing power structures and inequalities within the education system, it must be equally concerned that it does not reproduce or legitimise through non-collaborative methodologies any such dominant power structures within the research group. Thus the fear of muffling 'the voices of the voiceless' can be subjugated. Yet while I agree with the ideals and aims of emancipatory research, I feel that its primary weakness lies in the fact that there is no actual mechanism contained within, or indeed no evidence to suggest, that it can automatically achieve its aims or indeed ensure policy or discourse change. This is ironic in that such research claims to be strongly committed to making a direct contribution to practice. Yet I am not

convinced it can achieve that aim. My doubts as to the actual effectiveness on practice of any research process carried out on somebody else's behalf, nurtures my reluctance to label my study emancipatory or overly stress its collaborative elements. Thus while I emphasise that such ideals have shaped my ideology and in turn my rationale, I feel that the broader label of critical research is more appropriate. I am suggesting thus that this research project naturally falls within the critical research tradition based as it is on postmodern ideological influences. While I agree with criticisms of critical research that it is good on critique but weak on strategies for change or indeed radical transformation, I still feel that critical research is the best possible and most appropriate approach for this study.

My rationale for locating the research within this broad concept of critical research lies in its attempts to redefine the power relations inherent in any research process. I feel that such attempts can somewhat solve my earlier dilemma of providing a forum for the students' voices. Such attempts perhaps can go some way towards developing "a deeper understanding of experience from the perspectives of the participants" Maykut and Morehouse (1994, 44). By being reflexive, and working in close collaboration with a subgroup of the research cohort, I am hoping a dialogical process will develop through which the students' voices can be heard. Smith and Deemer (2000, 891) suggest that "to speak at all must always and inevitability be to speak for the someone else." They go on to opine that the issue of voice and validity is a moral and practical issue rather than an epistemological one (Smith and Deemer, 2000). This is similar to Scott's (1996, 69) assertion that ethics and epistemology are two sides of the same coin because the ways researchers chose to manage the collected data and interact with the participants determines the epistemological status of that data. I feel this to be true and thus I feel that a qualitative stance and approach is the most applicable to this research project. It is the most applicable in that I see myself as a positioned insider attempting to produce a narrative. Such a narrative according to Ely et al., (1997) is in itself a method of inquiry and a way of knowing; it is equally a discovery and an analysis. Undoubtedly these are qualities any researcher would desire.

Before moving to discuss the actual research strategies employed in this study, mention must be made of ethical considerations crucial to successful and impartial research. Prisoners are observed, examined, analysed, and categorised by those in positions of power on a daily basis. This is not only carried out by the prison authorities (governors, clinical psychologists, probation officers) but also by outside agencies (the judiciary, Government figures, the media), all of which would claim to have the prisoners' interests at heart. Few prisoners believe this. Most as a consequence are suspicious of research. While apparently entering into it wholeheartedly they often do so merely to alleviate boredom or earn kudos in the eyes of the authorities while many secretly denigrate its motives and usefulness. I did not want them to see my research work in that light and hoped that a strong code of ethics with regards to confidentiality in particular could perhaps offset this somewhat. Participants were assured that their identities would be concealed at every stage of the research process. They were assured that during the interview there would be no custodial staff or anyone other than myself present. They were assured that the questionnaires and interviews responses would be analysed by myself only and kept in safekeeping at all times. It was stressed that their participation was voluntary at all times and they could withdraw their consent to continue being a part of the research process and/or have their interviews deleted at any time. A formal consent form was drawn up and presented to each participant (Appendix 1a). This consent form determined to maintain the civil, social and human rights of the respondents as outlined in Appendix 1(b).. Due to the prison context, strict Exceptions to Confidentiality have been set down by the Research Ethics Committee of the IPS to which I agreed and explained to the participants (see Appendix 2). These Exceptions to Confidentiality are concerned primarily with procedures relating to possible disclosure by prisoners regarding crimes against minors or a real threat of violent crime against others or a risk of self-harm.

The various procedures and assurances outlined above are standard for any research work and while I believe they are important, they are nevertheless often formulaic and a mere tautology, designed in many cases to alleviate

the concerns of the researcher, the sponsor or supervisor rather than the actual participants themselves. Given prisoners' natural suspicion and possible reticence, and in view of my desire to make the research collaborative and emancipatory as discussed earlier, I felt that something more was needed. I was particularly mindful of the fact that regardless of my experience of prison life I did not know what it is to be a prisoner. I may have more insights into prison life than most people but I was always an outsider looking in and sometimes such insights are not really that revealing. Indeed Duguid (2000, 48) questions the multiple meanings attached to the word insight and suggests it is a "slippery notion, with prisoners lacking it, gaining it, losing it, pretending to have it, or not having the vaguest idea what it is." In an attempt to grasp this elusive notion I worked in close and active collaboration with a subgroup of third level prison students with whom I believe I have a trusting and respectful relationship. Throughout the entire research process they functioned rather like the action researcher's 'critical friend', refining the research questions, critiquing my analysis and highlighting possible researcher bias. Some of the group had been students of mine since I had started teaching in prison, advancing from Junior Certificate classes to third level, and all of them had attended my classes for a number of years. They were familiar with the purpose of the research and they were familiar with me. During the pilot research process they were actively involved in redesigning the research tools, the consent forms and the covering letter; frequently I returned to this subgroup seeking their advice and comment. I would be hesitant to suggest that this meant that I was engaged in some form of collaborative research or even respondent validation as I believe these concepts to be problematic as suggested by my earlier comments on power differentials, accountability, absolute knowledge and reflexivity in research. Minimally, by recognising the necessary interdependence of the subjectivities of the researcher and the participants, I wanted to collaborate in some way with this subgroup. I hoped that their active and ongoing cooperation would not only harness their sensitivities to the subtleties of the research questions but also enhance my interpretation and empathy with the other participants and the data. Thus the benefits of developing a more collaborative and egalitarian mode of inquiry would ensue.

4.4 Research Strategies

Qualitative verses quantitative methods

This research unquestionably falls under the qualitative label according to the following definition.

> "Qualitative research methodologies refer to social research that questions culturally constructed discourses that shape people's lives. Its value for the educational researcher is rooted in its shift of emphasis from quantitative methods of research (i.e. those based on systematic, formal, exacting and internally logical and empirical methods which 'scientism' has shrouded in an aura of legitimacy). It enables the researcher account for diversity and contextuality while acknowledging the pluralism of meanings and responses that they will encounter" Stenhouse, 1995, 35.

The characteristics and rationales attributed by Stenhouse (1995) to qualitative research appear to produce the ideal conditions in which to pursue this study. The selected procedures and instruments used throughout the research process are rationalised by the suggestion "if you are concerned with exploring people's life histories or everyday behaviour, then qualitative methods may be favoured (Silverman, 2000, 1). Thus my selection of an qualitative methodology is not purely an ideological one but also a practical one, driven by the need to employ those research methods best placed to elicit the data needed to answer the research questions. Its appeal is also more than a practical one. Mason (1996) suggests that qualitative research employs:

> "Methods of data generation which are flexible and sensitive to the social context in which data are produced as well as methods of data analysis and explanation building, which involve understandings of complexity, detail and context" Mason, 1996, 4.

Again this appeals to me particularly in light of previous concerns over subjectivity. Likewise her suggestion that it allows for "more emphasis on holistic forms of analysis and explanation" (Mason, 1996, 4) appeals on a viable level as it attempts to solve the vexing question of validity and

reliability discussed later in this chapter. Influenced by such beliefs I would contend that this research is qualitative due to three basic factors: Firstly it relies heavily on qualitatively generated data. Secondly it indicates a preference for meanings and motivations rather than behaviours. Thirdly it is in general an inductive, hypothesis generating study rather than a strictly hypothesis testing one.

Moving on from the idea of qualitative research as a concept to that of a set of interpretative and enquiring activities, we can see that while no real distinct set of practices or methods apply uniquely to the qualitative research process, a range of interpretative activities can be employed to elicit important and applicable insights and knowledge. In this study two main methods were used; surveying and interviewing. While this might appear to be mixing methods normally associated with conflicting methodologies, Mason (1996, 4) also claims that it is not unproblematic to integrate quantitative and qualitative methods and Wolcott (1994) believes that one does not necessarily preclude the other. Perhaps the distinction between each method is merely subjective rather than "a reflection of major, inherent differences" Coffey and Atkinson (1996, 5). This is similar to Henwood and Pidgeon's (1996) notion of a "principled combination" of qualitative and quantitative research activities. My selection of method was dictated by specific research questions. Thus quantitative methods were employed to construct the detailed 'factual' pattern of participation and qualitative methods used to examine the motivations of the students. Again this principled combination seemed most appropriate to this study as quantitative methods could more readily survey the complete cohort in order to determine a participation rate. The calculation of this rate would possibly have been drowned in intensive qualitative methods. On the other hand, qualitative methods could more readily elicit motivations and seemed more suitable because in a small-scale study, "statistical manipulation is both inappropriate and unnecessary" (Henwood and Pidgeon, 1996). Such methods were most suitable for this aspect of the study as my aim was to expand and generalise my findings on motivations to other contexts, a form of analytic generalisation as labelled by Yin (1984), and not to merely enumerate frequencies or statistical generalisations. It is possible according to Yin (1984) to produce theoretical generalisations even if statistical

generalisations are not possible. To produce theoretical generalisations I employed the process of analytic reduction as part of a grounded theory approach.

Grounded theory

Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1996: 294) outline the basic procedures involved in a grounded theory approach as a process of analytic reduction:

> "Here researchers collect data, formulate hypothesis based on that data, test their hypothesis using the data, and attempt to develop theory. Theory building in analytic induction consists of finding and delineating relationships between categories of observations. Often researchers attempt to distinguish a core category and explain how various subcategories influence the core category. The researcher's goal in developing grounded theory is to produce a set of propositions that explains the totality of the phenomenon. Qualitative researchers use examples of their observations and quotations from members of the group under study to support their theories" Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 1996, 294.

By grounded theory I take it that the authors are referring to Glaser and Strauss's (1967) notion that meaning (theory) would emerge from immersion in the field (on the ground). More specifically theory would inductively emerge from systematically analysed data rather than using the data to test preordained theory. Any prior theories or concepts would stand in the way of the researchers sensitive understanding of the cultural world to which they are exposed. Yet according to Silverman (2000, 63), such an inductive approach can be blind to the need to build cumulative bodies of knowledge and this warning has been considered in the comparison of my findings and procedures and those used by Clancy (2000), O'Mahony (1997a) and Forster (1990). While I would be hesitant to suggest that the study was one strictly derived from a grounded theory approach, I use grounded theory as an umbrella term because I concur with Glaser (1998) that doing social research and generating theory are two sides of the one coin. Therefore I believe that the process of generating emergent data from

grounded theory has much to offer this study. I believe that rich and robust data can produce a body of knowledge grounded in that data. The knowledge is developed through structuring the data into categories (themes or variables) and explaining each category, its properties and its relationship to the other categories. This type of constant comparison is in effect an amalgam of systematic coding, data analysis and theoretical sampling procedures that strive to generate theory directly grounded in the social phenomena under investigation. That it is explicitly emergent appeals to me as it may militate against the possibility of drowning out the students' voices as discussed earlier. Rather than assuming a hypothesis or in this case, assuming to know what the students are going to say in advance, the process can best allow the voices emerge. Thus this distinction between "emerging and forcing" theory as Glaser (1992) describes is fundamental to the aims of this study.

Before leaving the arena of grounded theory, it is cogent in light of the considerable disagreement to have emerged over the years between Glaser and Strauss concerning the implementation of the grounded theory, to state which of their publications guided this study. As suggested by the earlier umbrella metaphor, an amalgamation of both of their viewpoints and claims framed the research. In general I was inclined to favour Glaser's (1992) more relaxed approached when conducting the interview data analysis while the more structured approach advocated by Strauss (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) was useful in designing the questions and analysing the questionnaire. I suppose it could be said that in an epistemological sense I favoured Glaser while in a methodological sense I favoured Strauss. Nevertheless as stated earlier, the appeal of grounded theory lay with its perceived ability to generate theory deducted from logical assumptions or observation rather than strict hypothesis testing, and an amalgamation of many aspects of a broad grounded approach was used as is described later in this chapter. In short I believe grounded theory to be the most appropriate approach for a research study claiming not to be testing any predefined hypothesis or conjecture.

However Mason (1996, 5) suggests that it is applicable to set out "specific sets of formal hypothesis" at the start of the research process because in the

real world of social research the researcher must do so for funding or acceptance on to courses as well as the "coherent and rigorous development of their project" (Mason, 1996, 5). In a way this is somewhat similar to the difficulties encountered by Edwards et al., (2002) during a particular research project. Throughout the project there was a problem with reconciling the type of methodologies favoured by the researchers with those requested by the sponsors. The authors describe how a compromise was reached, albeit a somewhat ambiguous one, which went someway towards solving the dilemma (Edwards et al., 2002, 5). This cautionary tale serves to indicate that once again in the real world of social research, strategic improvisations or more creative ways of imagining methodology needs to be considered than one might have imagined at the start of the process. No one method is entirely appropriate; rather a multi-varied methodology as employed in my research could perhaps be the most suitable approach. The veracity of this can be seen in light of my amalgamation of the varying approaches to grounded theory as referred to above. The fact that the founding fathers of grounded theory cannot agree on their conceptions and methodologies suggest that there is no one ideal approach, no perfect methodology for any research project, thus an amalgamation of relevant approaches can be justified. Of course this does raise the troubling issue of ensuring and evaluating the validity, reliability and generalisability of research.

Validity, Reliability and Generalisability

It might seem premature to introduce these topics at this stage in the description of the research methods because according to Strauss and Corbin (1990, 17) they are normally associated with judging the adequacy of the research process and would perhaps appear better suited to a concluding paragraph. Yet because they are such fundamental facets of every aspect of the research process I feel that my understanding of their importance and my attempts to address them must be stated clearly. Validity involves the assessment of how well the conclusions are supported by the evidence. It measures the extent to which the research is measuring what it claims to be measuring. Reliability on the other hand is based on the principle that another researcher should by accurately reproducing the

methodology arrive at substantively similar results. Of course both concepts again raise questions as to the nature of interpretation and the social construction of meaning as well as questions on the role of the researcher and rhetoric in ethnographic research. Questions regarding the issues of truth and whose truth is being actuated in a research study are troubling. It is my contention that the truth is being constructed within the research process rather than being discovered by the research process. I am suggesting that no one has a direct line to the truth and consequently the findings of this research are true in as far as I know and can be easily generalised.

On a practical level Goetz and LeCompte's (1981) recommend that the provision of detailed information is the basis for the applicability, comparability and generalisation of research findings. If the context and research methods are sufficiently descriptive and described in detail comparisons are facilitated. This is similar to Geertz's (1973) notion of thick descriptions whereby comparisons can be drawn from small, densely textured facts. The resulting narratives produce meaning and create a reality. This in turn feeds into increasing the validity of the research through the process of conceptual density as described by Strauss and Corbin (1998). The generalisability of the study can in itself help ensure its validity. It does so by providing the opportunity for others to relate the narrative to their experiences and to infer particularistic understandings as suggested by Denzin and Lincoln (1998). When considering the validity of the study and its methodologies, I equated validity with reliability asking if I could rely on the methods to produce valid findings. In a similar way Wolcott (1994) also relates validity to reliability, while Lincoln and Guba (1985) link it to credibility, dependability, confirmability and fittingness. But of course Wolcott (1994) does caution that just because the methodology is sound this does not guarantee the validity of the research. Even so according to Miles and Huberman (1984), Mason (1996) and Flick (1998), the process of employing systematic checks throughout the research process can help ensure rigour; as can attempts to identify contrary evidence or negative instances. Here I am referring to Miles and Huberman's (1984) idea of the purposeful testing of possible rival hypothesis and interpretations. Denzin (1989) describes this as theoretical triangulation; the

intentioned seeking out of contradictory incidents and it is analogous to Flick's (1998) view of theoretical sampling to the point of saturation as an aid to generalisation. It is particularly pertinent in light of Popper's (1968) wonderfully succinct suggestion that no amount of evidence can prove you right but any amount can prove you wrong. Large-scale studies may never arrive at definitive proof but a single incident out of thousands may turn out to be very different from the rest. My attempts to identify any such rogue incidences are discussed in more detail later in this chapter and are influenced by Silverman's (2000) suggested comprehensive treatment of the raw data. Before moving into that arena, I would like to refer briefly to the other frequently mentioned method for testing reliability and validity, namely triangulation.

Triangulation

I take triangulation to be the combining of "several methods or sources to corroborate each other" (Miles and Huberman, 1984, 42). Denzin (1989, 236) suggests that triangulation is "the soundest strategy of theory construction," and he distinguishes between four now standard triangulation procedures: data, researcher, theory and methodological triangulation. According to Scott (1996), the reliability of the source is tested in data triangulation, the researcher's bias is tested in the researcher triangulation, the theory is tested by approaching the data with multiple perspectives and hypothesis in mind and the methodology is tested within and between each of the aforementioned. The resulting aggregation of data drawn from the different methods and procedures enables the researcher to map where the data intersects and thus cross validate each other, or where they diverge which then calls for further investigation and analysis of the phenomenon. Both Mason (1996) and Silverman (2000) have critiqued the concept of triangulation on the grounds that it at variance with ideas of social reality being constructed in different ways by different people in different contexts. They would claim that the more approaches or perspectives that are applied to a single phenomenon, the more and more realities will be produced rather than one single definitive version of reality. As an alternative Silverman (2000, 100) suggests that simplicity and theoretical consistency are the keys

to producing research that says "a lot about a little" rather than vice versa. A suggestion borne in mind in this study and referred to again later.

Synopsis of research activities

The research was conducted over a three-year period beginning in May 2000 and culminating with the dissertation submission in September 2003. The first year was spent conducting a pilot study. This involved designing and delivering a questionnaire to the subgroup of seven prison students mentioned earlier and was followed by conducting a semi-structured interview with each of them. Having discussed with them the preliminarily data analysis and the redesign of the questionnaire and interview schedule, I was ready to write up the process and submit the conclusions to my supervisor in April 2001. In effect this pilot study was a scaled down mini version of the larger research that was carried out over the next two years. It served as a dry run in which the methodology was tested while the collected data was used to contextualise and appraise the ongoing literature review. I found the pilot study to be very useful and learned greatly from it correcting many inherent deficits before building on its strengths and embarking on the next stage of the process. It was particularly useful in affording me the opportunity to work in close cooperation with the subgroup of prison students and I believe this facilitated the redesign of better and more appropriate research tools. As the pilot study proceeded I was allowed the time and opportunity to inform interested and relevant stakeholders of my intent and future plans and all the necessary parties were well informed and prepared by the start of year two.

In year two the second stage of the research process commenced and during September and October 2001 I sent the revised postal questionnaire to all students registered with the Open University at the time of the questionnaire distribution. The questionnaire functioned to elicit biographical information on those studying at third level in Irish prison and was analysed with a view to establishing a pattern of participation as determined by my research questions. During September 2002 I started to address the second of my research questions; what motivates prisoners to undertake third level study while in custody. Over the next few months I interviewed thirty-eight of the

cohort about their motivations using a prepared and redesigned interview schedule. This schedule provided some structure and a focus but allowed the students flexibility in how they responded. The interviews were taped with the student's permission and transcribed afterwards. From September 2002 onwards I began to analysis the interview data. This involved listening to the tapes and rereading each transcript many times in order to familiarise myself with it. I noted in one margin my responses to anything that struck me as unusual or interesting. In the other margin I began to document emergent themes using key words to capture their essence. These themes were then listed on a separate sheet and connections between them identified. As the resulting categories were based on the students' talk rather than abstract theoretical speculations, I returned to the subgroup for their views on the validity of my categorisations. At the beginning of 2003 I began to write up the first draft of the final submission returning to the transcripts to support my thematic arguments and returning to the subgroup to provide supplementary interpretations of the narrative if necessary. I submitted this draft in April 2003 and following feedback the final dissertation was submitted in September 2003. More precise details as to how the pilot study functioned, the role of the subgroup, the collection and the analysis of data are outlined below.

4.4 Methods of Data Collection and Analysis.

Procedures for data collection

As outlined in the introduction the two broad research questions anchoring this study concerned the sketching of a pattern of participation for prison students in third level study coupled with an examination of their motivations for study at his level while in custody. In order to determine motivation I conducted what could be loosely termed a semi-structured informal interview with thirty-eight third level prison students, more than half of the cohort. I did so in an attempt to collect statements of students' opinion and to explore in some depth their experiences, motivations and reasoning. The interviews were preceded by a postal questionnaire sent to

the entire study group (Appendix 3). The questionnaire functioned to elicit biographical information on all those studying at third level in Irish prisons. Such 'factual' information as demographic features, educational standards, educational and employment experiences pre-conviction, educational career while in prison, and the students' current involvement in higher education courses were garnered and collated through the questionnaire. But before the questionnaire was delivered, issues relating to access to prisoners through the ironically labelled 'gatekeepers' needed to be considered. Here I found the pilot study to be particularly useful.

The pilot study

As mentioned earlier, for the pilot study I worked in close cooperation with a small subgroup of students all of whom were following third level courses in the prison in which I worked. These students were actively involved in structuring and testing the questionnaire, covering letter and semi-structured interviews. This type of research collaboration worked well in highlighting examples of sensitive issues or questions that I might have been unaware of, or overlooked, and which would have mitigated against full cooperation by other students during the final data collection. It equally served to clarify confusing or ambiguous questions. For example, I had worded a question, "had you undertaken any form of third level education pre-conviction?" The students advised me to change this to pre-first conviction in order to avoid confusion as many students had being in and out of prison so often that their education was frequently interrupted and recommenced. This incident can be seen as an example of what Ely et al., (1997) describe as the ways in which participants see experiences that researchers cannot. Throughout the research process I returned to this group to seek their ideas as to the next step and how to represent my findings. I feel that my objectives and the type of research undertaken warranted respondent validation of some sort, if only to make the findings and interpretations credible to the participants. Having reformulated the proposed questionnaire and semi-structured interviews in light of their feedback, I decided not to include this pilot group in the final interview process during year two as I felt they were overly familiar with the objectives of the research. I believed they were just too close to it and having discussed this

with the group they concurred. However I did use their completed questionnaires as they provided the information needed to establish a complete pattern of participation for the entire study group.

Access to third level students in prisons other than my own was managed through personal contact with prison educators with whom I was familiar. I felt that this type of personal contact and familiarity was necessary to ensure their active cooperation and the smooth running of the distribution of the questionnaires and my subsequent visits to the prisons. Indeed in hindsight it proved so, as the highest response rates came from those prisons where teachers actually handed the questionnaires to the students and discussed its purpose with them rather than just distributing the questionnaire with little or no comment. By doing so they assured the students of my 'credentials' as 'someone in the know' who could be trusted. Meanwhile formal letters and phone calls to prison and educational management stating my aims and intentions, and seeking their cooperation and consent were distributed. Any concerns that my familiarity with the subgroup as well as my position of 'insider' researcher would impose a threat to validation was allayed somewhat by the simple fact that all the students were aware that I was carrying out the research for academic reasons and they knew that the IPS was not sponsoring me. I feel that this independence ensured that the emergence of the 'whose side are you on' question did not occur. In addition my job as prison teacher employed by the DES rather than the Department of Justice or IPS readily identifies me as an independent insider. Given the prison context this is an enviable and somewhat unique position in which to be. Furthermore the ideologies of prison education based as they are on adult education philosophies are frequently in direct conflict with the philosophy of imprisonment as discussed earlier and this conflict also identifies the prison teacher as being independent and beyond the control of the prison service.

As suggested the active collaboration of the subgroup as well as the pilot study itself ensured that the design and delivery of the final questionnaire and its covering letter was a relatively uncomplicated matter. I was particularly keen that the covering letter would encourage its readers to become involved in the research process and view it in a positive light

(Appendix 4). As this was the respondents' first contact with the researcher, its function as an initial introduction and a first impression cannot be over-estimated. While Cohen and Manion (1980, 86) state "the purpose of the covering letter is to indicate the aim of the survey, to convey to the respondent its importance, to assure him of confidentiality and to encourage reply," Sudman and Bradburn (1982, 217) elaborate that it should also inform the respondent as to what the study is about and its usefulness. It thus indicates that the respondent is important to the research process as well as offering reward for participation. I was particularly eager to incorporate Drever's (1995) suggestion that it should include promise of feedback and a firm thank you. Consequently I hope to make contact with as many of the respondents as possible to thank them for their cooperation and discuss the findings with them if they so wish.

The questionnaires

When designing the questionnaire I found the most important factor to consider when formulating each question was to examine, why am I actually asking this question? I was acutely aware of ensuring that the questions appear non-threatening (Sudman and Bradburn, 1982, 21). Consequently I was wary of including questions that directly reflect on the students' offences and crimes. While it was not necessary to go into details regarding the type of offences represented, I believe it was important to establish a pattern of participation for the categories of offence represented. I believe this necessary in order to determine if third level prison students are over or under-represented in particular categories of offence. The category would have a direct bearing on the length of sentence, access to learning opportunities, political attitudes to education, and other such motivational and participation variables. Thus the prisoner's motivation for study could be influenced directly by his category of offence as certain categories are confined to particular prisons and this would have in turn a direct bearing on the findings. Indeed this is an area in which I believe further research is warranted and is an issue developed in later chapters. To establish this pattern the postal questionnaires were colour-coded in order to identify the prison from which the student responded. While I am not suggesting that each category of prisoner is comprised of homogeneous groupings, I am

suggesting that the prisons in which they are incarcerated can bring to bear significant influences on patterns of participation and motivational factors. The research attempted to examine this hypothesis and the only way I could do that without having to ask the prisoner directly what was his category of offence was to colour-code the questionnaires. I must admit I felt uncomfortable doing this as it seemed some how to betray the ideals of the research but having discussed the dilemma with the subgroup we concluded that the benefits outweighed the risks. We felt that in this particular case asking the question directly or disclosing the rationale behind the question could perhaps overly influence the response.

When designing the questionnaires and in order to achieve clarity, I used aided-recall lists where possible as it is suggested that this can produce higher levels of reported behaviour than do unaided procedures (Sudman and Bradburn, 1982, 37). I was also aware that such lists must be exhaustive as items not mentioned, or mentioned only as 'other', could be substantially underreported relative to the items that are mentioned specifically. I found the pilot study and subgroup collaboration helped produce comprehensive lists with clear and specific wording. When working through the questionnaires and interviews with the pilot group, I asked them what did they think was meant by each question? Again I found this useful in drafting the final questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. Finally I also used the pilot study as an opportunity to test the feasibility of the precoding system. As a result I discovered I had too many open questions in the initial questionnaire as the responses were difficult to summarise, the coding was time-consuming and the scale could have introduced an amount of coding error. Instead I included as many closed questions as possible in order to readily collect and collate the data. The advantage to the respondents being that precoding makes it easier for them to respond to fairly complex stimuli without having to overly search their memories and organise their thoughts. The disadvantage according to Sudman and Bradburn (1982, 154) is that it "may lead to more superficial responses and bias in the answers." However I believe that no matter how comprehensive the precoding system is, one can never guarantee complete comparability of responses because the respondents understanding of the question may not be the same as that of the researcher. When deciding on

the question order I began with easy, factual closed questions in the hope of funnelling the respondent's train of thought from more general to more specific topics. Thus the end product was a self-completion questionnaire based on a fixed sequence of largely closed questions.

The interviews

This funnelling procedure was applied also to the semi-structured interviews where I started with salient, non-threatening but necessary questions leaving the more difficult ones to the end. Likewise I asked longer questions towards the end of the interview as the situation became more relaxed and dialogic. This seemed pertinent in light of Sudman and Bradburn's (1982, 50) statement that "many psychological experiments indicate that the length of the reply is directly related to the length of the question." Naturally I felt that longer answers would furnish more information but in fact this did not always prove to be the case, and in fact the interviews rarely followed the preset pattern I had anticipated. Indeed many of the practical details I had considered when designing the initial semi-structured interviews were to prove untenable or unnecessary on undertaking the pilot study. I soon discovered that the best approach was in fact an informal un-structured interview, "a conversation with a purpose". Cohen and Manion (1980, 241) identify such an interview as "a two-person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research-relevant information and focused by him on content specified by research objectives." Of course this reinforces the informality and flexibility of the process by making both parties feel comfortable and allows the respondents develop a sense of ownership over the process and their ideas. As so many factors differed from one interview to the next; mutual trust, level of familiarity with the interviewee and the contextual influences of the varying prison regimes among other things, the unstructured interview allowed me modify the sequence of questions, change the wording, explain or add to ideas raised as they occurred. I believe this facilitated the collection of more data than with a strictly semi-structured interview (Appendix 5). Having designed an initial semi-structured interview for the pilot study, the redesigned interview schedule incorporated the ground to be covered and the main questions to be asked. I believe that the informality of the

schedule added to the possibility that the interview was an interaction, a dialogue and not a strict and unyielding researcher-researched dyad (Symon and Cassell, 1998). It also facilitated in-depth exploration of unexpected responses (Tuckman, 1972).

Procedures for data analysis

Having collected the quantitatively generated data in the questionnaire, I set about exploring and presenting it in order to establish the pattern of participation. The questionnaire analysis was carried out in five key stages. In stage one, the process of familiarisation involved a reading and rereading of each completed questionnaire in order to familiarise myself with the emergent key issues and recurrent themes. This allowed for the process of abstraction and conceptualisation to take place and led neatly into the second stage of identifying a thematic framework. Here I re-examined and referenced the key issues and themes in order to design an index whereby the data was coded. This initial index was highly descriptive and rooted plainly in a priori issues, such as age left school, gender and parental occupations. As I began to index the more complex and emotive responses such as the reasons why the participants may have left full-time education at a young age, it was necessary for me to make judgements about meanings and about the relevance and importance of implicit connections between themes and responses. Here I returned to the pilot study group to see if they concurred with my reasoning and we reached agreement that the judgements represented some sort of intuitive and considered reflection. Then I incorporated their ideas and suggestions into a more developed index.

During the next stage this more developed index was systematically chartered. In other words, I moved various responses from their original context or questions in the individual questionnaires and rearranged them according to appropriate thematic references before presenting them on a large chart, which I then displayed on the wall. This process of charting the main themes and responses allowed me identify even more readily the range of attitudes and experiences for each question. The final stage of the questionnaire analysis involved refining my thematic mapping in order to structure and support my interpretation of the responses in the context of the

research questions. Ritchie and Spenser (1996, 186), suggest that it is during this final stage that the "serious and systematic process of detection begins" by which a creative search for structure rather than a "multiplicity of evidence" ensures that reliable and valid explanations and typologies can become apparent. I then proceeded to represent the responses in the questionnaires and the data outlined on the wall chart.

Using the Microsoft Excel programme, I was able to input the data and present the findings mainly in the form of frequency histograms. I chose this form of data presentation because it is 'easily read' as it effortlessly indicates the mode, range and distribution of the data. Also it was useful in two ways, indicating possible error in the sampling or inputting of the data as well as indicating in a simple manner the levels of variation within the sample population. Moving on from looking at the data descriptively to inferentially, I had now entered the arena of hypothesis generation and testing. Having hoped that participant collaboration, the pilot testing and the methods of data collection in themselves, would ensure some degree of validity, reliability and generalizability during the data collection, I equally needed to seek the same guarantees from my data analysis strategies.

Recently traditional definitions of the validity and reliability of qualitative research based on sample sizes, triangulation and respondent validation have been questioned in favour of criteria that focus on the verisimilitude of the study. Postmodernists for example, question the concept of respondent validation and claim that the respondents do not necessarily "have privileged status as commentators of their own status" (Silverman, 2000, 176). Thus alternative and/or additional measures could be developed and Silverman (2000, 178) goes on to list four such interrelated alternatives. Each of these I applied to my study. Firstly the refutability method assumed relations between phenomena is rigorously refuted in order to eliminate spurious correlations. If the relationship cannot be refuted (and often the easiest way to test this is to apply a form of multivariate analysis which is discussed in more detail in the subsequent subheading) then its validity is ensured and the researcher can proceed with the second alternative. The constant comparable method involves repeated testing of a provisional hypothesis through the introduction of more data; the benefit of this is that

all the data gets to be frequently inspected and analysed. This is very similar to the third alternative, namely comprehensive data treatment, whereby all cases of the data are introduced into the analysis until the hypothesis can be applied to every single case, so that a defensible generalisation can be developed. The final alternative as summarized by Silverman (2000, 180) is deviant-case analysis but it must be noted that this is not the same as the traditional deviant-case analysis applied in quantitative research. The comprehensive data treatment outlined above will inevitably throw-up some deviant cases. In this alternative, each negative case is confronted until a small set of recursive rules are established that incorporates all the data. It must be remembered that no case is merely deviant by nature and only becomes so when applied to the hypothesis under review. Thus the identification and further analysis of deviant cases can only strengthen the validity of the research as this ensures that every piece of datum is accounted for and not simply discarded or ignored because it simply does not apply.

It is important to note in each of Silverman's (2000) alternatives the emphasis placed on analysis based on a theoretical approach. Unlike with strict respondent validation, wherein the subjects respond to the researchers' tentative findings and they in turn react accordingly, the danger of anecdotalism, or of glibly retelling cultural stories rather than 'factual statements' is lessened. The misleading ideal of seeking a 'true' picture through triangulation as mentioned earlier is also avoided in favour of simplicity and rigour that helps identify the non-random characteristics of the data. By combining a simple form of respondent validation through consultation with the subgroup in tandem with multivariate methods of analysis as outlined above, I hoped to eliminate as much measurement error as possible. Bearing in mind Litwin's (1995, 7) comment that "no survey instrument or test is perfectly reliable, but some are clearly more reliable than others", I believe that this combined form of data analysis was the most appropriate for this study.

When it came to analysing the qualitative generated data I was aware that there are not as many clear and accepted set of procedures for qualitatively generated data analysis as there are for quantitative data (Robson, 1993,

371). Nevertheless in this study I employed an adapted form of Huberman and Miles' (1994) systematic approach to data analysis not unlike the multivariate approach outlined already. The process could be described as entailing content analysis through inductive coding. It is sometimes called analytic induction and involves identifying categories within and from the data (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1996), Miles and Huberman (1984), Robson (1993, 380). A set of categories is established and then the number of incidents quoted are placed into each category and counted. The categories must be precise so that any coder can arrive at the same result, i.e. readily identify the category to which the incident belongs. The actual categories chosen are determined by the frequency of responses in that frequent responses merit their own category while an infrequent response will be named as 'other'. The skill is to ensure that every interview response will effortlessly fall into a category and only a very few 'others' will remain.

My analysis of the interview data was carried out in three broad sweeps, namely data reduction, data structuring and drawing conclusions. Firstly attempts were made to reduce the data. This involved listening repeatedly to the tape recording to become familiar with the responses, recognise comparability and commonalities and get a feel for emerging patterns and ideas. The interviews where then transcribed to identify further the above and aid future analysis. Emerging themes and patterns within the transcriptions were annotated and colour-coded. Meanwhile, I was fortunate that a colleague agree to read and identify themes in the data and was equally fortunate that their identified themes were similar to my own. The next step attempted the reduction of the data in the transcripts through summarising and coding. Each response was summarised and any direct quotations deemed pertinent for inclusion in the thesis were noted. In many cases I returned to the pilot group to determine if they agreed with my summations or felt that I may have had 'missed the point'. I rank ordered the themes and statements by simply spreading the data out on a table and with colour stickers identified the frequency of themes, statements and patterns of behaviour. I then created a visual display of common themes and sub themes in the form of a colour coded flow chart, which I placed on the wall. Thus for example I drew up a preliminary list of motivational

categories by attaching loose labels (e.g. boredom, self-development, get a qualification), into which I classified the raw data and further modifications were introduced as necessary. By categorising frequently mentioned factors, recurring themes became perceptible. It became apparent that a pattern was emerging and in fact nine categories finally emerged (Appendix 6).

Meanwhile I proceeded to code the summations returning to the transcriptions where necessary, as I was very aware that this process could lead to fragmentation, possible loss of information and decontextualisation of data. I assigned codes to each theme and sub theme in order to make the wall flow chart more manageable and structured and to reduce the data further. I devised a simple code combination of letter and number to each theme and sub theme. For example, the interview question could be "C" and thematic response would be (C1, C2, C3) and so on. For any responses that proved difficult to categorise I added an extra letter to the coding, for example, C3x before comparing it to other codes to identify possible similarities or differences. A benefit of this strategy is the fact that once the coding system is in place and recorded, any researcher can reconstruct the data set. As I worked through the interview responses in this manner I found that I was drawing conclusions as they occurred to me. While initially they appeared tentative, after testing them with the other responses I found that they gained greater validity. Having completed this process I found that I had reduced and structured the data to a satisfactory degree and set about the process of theory building.

Theory-building

Having established the motivational factors as my set of categories I constructed frequency distributions by listing the variables in each category, counted the number of each, translated them into percentage distributions and displayed the results in tabular form as displayed in Appendix 6. I proceeded to establish relationships between categories, for example pre-conviction educational experience (independent variable) and primary motivation (dependent variable), before measuring the relationship to reflect the strength and direction of each variable. I did this to highlight any

possible interdependency of properties, for example students with few previous qualifications are motivated primarily by the desire to upgrade their qualifications. Attempts to draw causal inferences such as the above example were tested in order to evaluate the substantive implications of the findings. I did this by introducing other variables into the investigation so that the other variables can be ruled out as alternative explanations. In this example the third variable could be category of prisoner. For example, political prisoners are instructed by their commanding officers to avail of all educational opportunities while in custody so in this case it is political motivation rather than previous educational experience that is the independent variable. Determining if all political prisoners who are in a position to do so are in fact taking third level courses could perhaps test such a hypothesis. If it is found that they are then the issue of previous educational qualifications is no longer a factor. It was thus possible to make an inference regarding relationships among variables through hypothesis testing.

4.5 Interpretation and Presentation.

The final stage in the process of analysis was to ensure that the procedures could lead to theory development. The previous example indicates how this came about as the hypothesis can only be verified after it has been tested and the hypothesis itself is only a "tentative answer to a research question that is expressed in the form of a clearly stated relationship between the independent and dependent variable" (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 1996, 62). The refinement of the hypothesis can thus lead to the establishment of accurate evidence, to the development of generalisations, to specifying a concept and each will in turn help build a variable theory. The ideal route is to move from the conceptual to the observational level, moving from concepts into variables by mapping them into a set of values that will explain the phenomenon and help the researcher draw conclusions. This is similar to the tactic of building casual networks as described by Robson (1993, 401). The final link in the chain is in relating the findings to the general theoretical framework of the research and my attempts to do this

are outlined in my concluding chapter. When it came to presenting both the quantitatively and qualitatively generated data, I attempted to travel from "structured questions to negotiated text" (Fontana and Frey, 2002, 645). In doing so the actual presentation of data differed considerably moving from tabular to narrative form. In arriving at the narrative and concluding with it I was conscious of 'how narrative and theory are entwined' as opined by Stronach and MacLure (1997, 152). It would have been difficult to develop theory and reach conclusions without interlacing them into the students' accounts of their experiences and beliefs. Consequently I included the students' responses verbatim as well as my summaries and inferences in Chapter 4 in order to "tell it as it is" (Coolican, 1990, 235). By doing so I hope to present some form of practical theory that would represent the views of the students while simultaneously answering the research questions at hand.

4.6 Summary of Chapter

In this chapter I have outlined the research procedures used in the study as well as my rationale for adapting those particular procedures. I began by locating this qualitative research project primarily within the critical research paradigm. I identified also how the ideals and aims of collaborative as well as emancipatory research have come to influence the study and my research praxis. I suggested that my perspectives as a researcher are strongly influenced by postmodern premises of cultural theory and subjectivity. Consequently I adopted a level of scepticism towards notions of true, valid and reliable knowledge and have indicated where I believe this came into play during the design and course of the inquiry. At all times I strove to recognise the inevitable presence of the researcher and consequently used methods which I hoped would facilitate the students providing the story rather than an account overly influenced by the researcher's preconceptions. By including this outline of theoretical considerations I intend to explain the rationale and focus of the research questions and also provide some tools for analysis of the findings outlined in Chapter 5.

In describing the research strategy used to collect and analyse the data, I indicated how my options were considered in response to two particular questions. Firstly, I wondered if the methodology could provide evidence that would answer the research question. Secondly, I queried if the chosen methodology could in itself ensure validity and reliability? Each question was considered in light of my views on the role of validity and reliability in research and my attempts to address the matter. I outlined the methods used to collect the data needed to address the first of my research questions relating to a participation profile for third level prison students before indicating how I analysed and presented that data. I described also the interview process used to garner the prison students' perceptions of their motivations for third level study. I provided an in depth outlined of that data analysis before concluding with a description of how I arrived at my interpretations and theory formation. The next chapter provides an outline of my findings as well as a discussion on how these findings might be applied to other circumstances and research projects.

Chapter 5 FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section presents the findings deduced from the analysis of the questionnaires and provides an answer to the research question; who participates in third level education while in prison? Through statistical analysis and graphical representation, the answer is suggested and a picture emerges of the typical third level prison student. Yet the accuracy of this picture is questioned and it is suggested that there are in fact two types of typical third level prison student. The second section presents the findings construed from the individual interviews and addresses the research question, why do these prisoners participate in third level study? It is suggested that the motivations for study are as diverse as the student body itself. There are many factors that influence initial motivation and motivations change as the students advance in their studies. It is suggested that generally the two types of typical student are influenced by different motivational factors. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the implications of this and the meanings that can be drawn.

5.2 Questionnaire analysis and presentation of findings

The rationale behind employing a postal questionnaire (Appendix 3) as a primary method of data collection has been outlined in Chapter4, but can be précised as follows. Because the initial focus of my research question is an attempt to discover a pattern of participation among third level prison students, the postal questionnaire served to gather factual information concerning the prisoners' personal circumstances and histories as well as providing the opportunity to introduce myself and my research to the students prior to seeking their agreement for a later in-depth interview. In essence the questionnaire analysis provides a comprehensive profile of the demographic, social background and educational background of the student body following third level courses in Irish prisons in the academic year 2002 – 2003. The findings are based on students' responses to the postal questionnaire administered in Spring 2002 and are presented under the three

headings, demographic profile, social background and educational background. Throughout the analysis, the findings are set against relevant comparators, namely work by Clancy (2001, 2000, 1995), O'Mahony (1997a, 1997b), and Lynch (1997) as discussed in Chapter 2.

Response rate

Sixty-one questionnaires were posted and fifty-six were completed and returned. This represents a response rate of ninety-one percent. While a higher rate would have been more desirable, it can, however, be compared favourably to that of Clancy's (2001), sixty-seven percent response rate. It is difficult to determine if the non-respondents differed in any systematic or noteworthy way from those that responded. It would appear that some of the non-respondents were being transferred from prison to prison around the time the questionnaires were being distributed, and were thus difficult 'to pin down'. Other non-respondents subsequently withdrew from their courses, and perhaps their expectation of non-completion could have influenced their decision not to reply. Of those non-respondents who remained in a stable prison environment and continued with their studies, it would seem that the majority were within the category of sex offender. Perhaps the general reticence of this subgroup of prisoner could account for their natural suspicion of 'questioning outsiders'. Such factors lead me to believe that the response rate was reasonable and that the practical measures adopted to minimise the likelihood of non-responses were appropriate, as outlined in Chapter 4. It should be noted however that none of the students, including the subsequent non-respondents, refused to complete the questionnaires when approached by their liaison teachers, the non-respondents simply failed to return the questionnaires. It should also be noted that the actual level of direct contact by the local liaison teacher was a significant factor in the rate of response, as some prisons had one hundred response rates and others a lower rates. It seems that lower levels of response in particular prisons stemmed from the liaison teacher's lower level of initial contact and follow-up procedures. Lastly of those that responded, each one agreed to be interviewed at a later stage and this would suggest that their decision to be included in the research process was both

voluntary and considered. Of those that agreed, thirty-eight were interviewed.

Demographic Profile of Student Body.

Age

I decided to determine the student's age as it stood on the 1st of February 2002, this being the general date of commencement of the Open University's academic year. It was found that the average age is thirty-seven. As is to be expected this is much higher than that of the mainstream higher education student, which is twenty according to the Higher Education Authority 2000/01 Annual Report. While Clancy (2001) did not investigate the average age of mainstream third level students, he does note that just over half of the new entrants were aged eighteen at entry. Nineteen per cent were less than eighteen while twenty-one per cent were aged nineteen at the time of entry. The remaining ten per cent were aged twenty or over. Less than five per cent of entrants could be classified as mature students being aged twenty-three or over at the time of entry Clancy (2001, 35). We can surmise that the majority of mainstream third level students were less than twenty-three[7] years of age. This of course is in direct contrast with the prison situation. A more relevant comparison can be made with mature students in mainstream third level education.

Here we can see that the prison population also deviates from the mainstream mature student population along lines of age because the typical Irish mature student is under thirty-five years of age according to Lynch (1997, 198). Interestingly thirty-seven was also the average age discovered in the pilot study of Mountjoy prison students, so we can see that in this instance the findings of the pilot study is the same as for the larger study. It

[7] The definition of 'mature' differs between countries, being 23 years and over in Ireland and 21 years and over in Britain. The Higher Education Authority (HEA) has suggested that the percentage of mature students entering higher education in Ireland is quite low by comparison with that in Britain, and is even more unfavourable with such countries as Sweden, USA, Germany and Austria. They go on suggest that the difference in demographic profile sheds little bearing on the situation (HEA, 1995, 81).

should be noted that while this was higher than that of the mainstream higher education student it was also significantly higher than the average age of the Mountjoy prisoner which is twenty-eight (O'Mahony 1997a, 33). Tellingly, O'Mahony (1997a, 29) stresses that the age profile of the Mountjoy prisoner cannot be taken as representative of the whole prison system. This is accurate as the Irish Prison Service Annual Report 2001 states that the majority of prisoners (twenty-two percent) fall within the twenty-one to twenty-four age bracket (IPS, 2001, 87). Hence we can note that the average third level prison student is significantly older than the majority of other prisoners.

I suggest that there are a number of reasons why the average age of the research cohort is significantly higher than the general prison population. Only long-term prisoners or those with a number of years of their sentence left to serve are sponsored[8] for third level study. Similarly those students that have shown a level of commitment and history of success in the prison school are considered. Finally prisoners that had availed of third level study prior to their conviction are also most likely to continue with their studies while in prison. In general, all such prisoners tend to be older than the mean. IPS statistics confirm that the largest majority of male prisoners classified by length of sentence fall within the thirty to thirty-nine age bracket (IPS, 2001, 93). It would thus seem that generally the longer the sentence the older the prisoner. When coupled with the fact that the vast majority of sex offenders are over fifty years of age (Irish Prison Service Annual Report 2001, 93) and almost half (forty-six percent) of the questionnaire respondents were sex offenders, it is not surprising that the age profile of higher education prison student is so high. Reasons why the typical prison student is older than mainstream mature students are less readily surmised. I would suggest that this has more to do with the situational and socio-economic barriers to participation discussed in Chapter 2 than any aspect of prison policy or practice. If we bear in mind the fact that in Ireland the typical mature student is considered to be female, under

[8] When a student applies to the IPS to be sponsored for third level study, the Education Co-ordinator with the Prison Service (having interviewed the candidate) along with a representative from the Education Unit who is familiar with the student will meet to discuss the student's suitability. The main criteria taken into consideration are the student's academic career to date and the length of sentence yet to complete.

thirty-five years of age, single and childless (Lynch, 1997; 198) we will see that the prison picture is not representative of the mainstream picture and as a result many complex forces must be at work in mudding the picture, some of which are discussed later in this chapter.

Gender

Of the fifty-six respondents, only one was female and she was the only woman in an Irish prison studying at third level during the academic year 2002. While this might appear to be a rather disproportionate ratio in terms of gender ratios studying at third level beyond the prisons, it does serve to highlight Ireland's disproportionate rate of imprisonment along gender lines. As only two percent of the Irish prison population is female (Penal Reform News, 2001) the low percentage represented here is in fact proportional. Due to the disproportionably low number of women in custody in Irish prisons, comparisons at a national level with either third level mature students or school leavers seems meaningless. Thus I believe it to be a futile exercise to compare the prison picture with non-prison students along gender lines, as it would be unreasonable to extrapolate on the grounds of one individual. Realistically accurate and analogous comparisons could not be reached. Initially I had intended to provide a gender comparison for the distribution of students by field of study, but again the small cohort of women prisoners would not allow for such a comparison and I am unable to pursue any such variables. Because there is only one female student and she could thus be readily identified the whole concept of gender comparisons must be avoided on the grounds of ethical considerations alone. In conclusion, the solitary woman's educational and social background profile as well as her interview responses have been subsumed into the larger picture without any reference to her gender and were not analysed along such lines.

Place of birth and upbringing until age 15

The rationale behind the inclusion of questions (3) and (4) (Appendix 3), was rooted in the issue of social exclusion and participation in third level education. By establishing a rate of participation in higher education for

Dublin-born prisoners I could compare the results to the findings of both O'Mahony (1997a, 1993) and Clancy (1995, 2001) for further analysis. This in turn might throw some light on the initial research question - who participates?

Forty-one percent of higher education prison students were born and brought up within the greater Dublin area. Of those fifteen percent came from the postal district Dublin 12 and twelve percent came from postal district Dublin 24. No discernable pattern along postal district lines could be established for the reminder of students. While the former two postal districts correspond with those areas typified as being "characterised by a high proportion of corporation housing and often by a prevalence of opiate drug abuse and high levels of long-term unemployment" (O'Mahony, 1997a, 39). All of the postal districts under-represented in Clancy's (2001) study of mainstream third level students are represented in the prison survey, yet many of the other postal districts represented in this study are "more obviously mixed housing or middles-class areas," according to O'Mahony (1997a, 39). Thus it would seem that throughout the general prison population, Dublin third level students come from a broad range of postal districts. This is interesting if compared with the findings of the pilot study dealing with Mountjoy Prison alone. Here it was found that eighty eight percent of students were from under-represented districts. This suggests that in this instance Mountjoy Prison is not representative of the wider prison population. Such discrepancies suggests that the profile of higher education prison students can vary significantly according to their category of offence, a suggestion that is confirmed in other areas throughout the questionnaire analysis.

The difficulty I encountered in trying to extrapolate the socio-economic background of Dublin prisoners from the postal district in which they were reared suggests that this is an area to be considered in more detailed before attempts at further and similar research can be carried out in the future. In future data needs to be collected in such a way that it can be broken down or grouped by postal districts or geographical areas, and in particular in a way which allows for the different backgrounds and localities of prisoners to be

examined in both a rural and urban, advantaged and disadvantaged context, if such factors are deemed relevant.

Social Background of Student Body

While being acutely aware of the measurement problems and practical difficulties of determining the students' social background by attempting to categorise the socio-economic status and social class of their parents, I felt it was necessary to do so particularly for the purposes of arriving at analogous comparisons with relevant studies. I wanted to compare the prison students' profiles with those of mature students and school leavers as well as the larger prison population. This practice of seeking data on parents' social backgrounds directly from the students mirrors Clancy's (1995, 2001) approach. The UK Standard Occupational Classification as used by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) was used in this research (Appendix 7).

While designing and analysing the questionnaire I was particularly mindful of the fact that many aspects of the social and economic situations of individuals and groups do not lend themselves easily to quantitative measurement. All data has it limitations and the gathering of comprehensive and appropriate data is a time-consuming process and often beyond the remit of the academic student. Again I would suggest that future attempts to emulate or develop this research should bare in mind such limiting factors and a wider and more comprehensive system of measurement, critical examination and assessment would be more effective. Even so the questionnaire used here does provide the basis for valuable insights into the social and economic reality of the prisoners' lives before imprisonment. No data system could exhaustively describe or reflect those realities.

Occupation of father

Once again the driving rationale behind this question was to compare the prison data with that of O'Mahony (1997a). If we concur with Clancy's

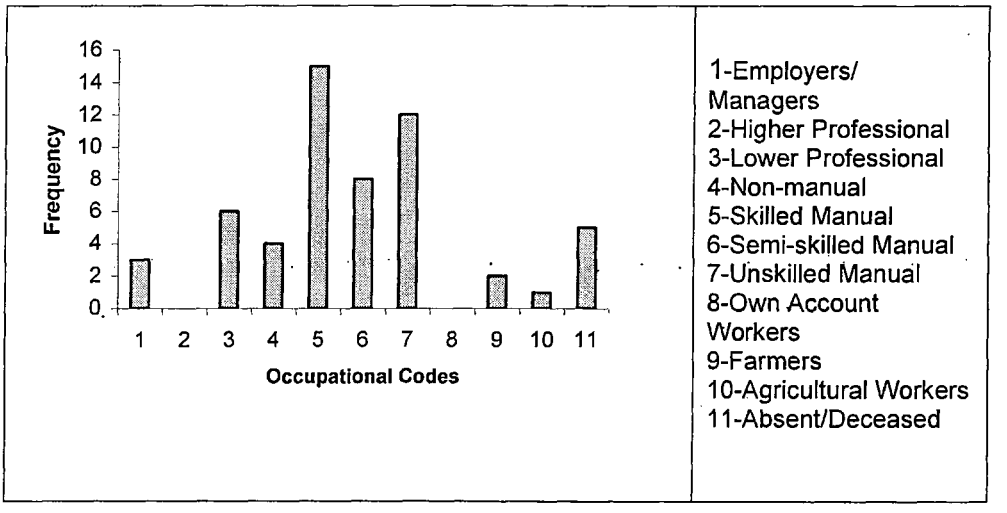
(1995, 164) findings that socio-economic background brings much to bear on participation rates in higher education, then it is necessary to determine if the socio-economic background of the third level prison student differs from that of the general prison population. Previously it has been established that "seventy-seven percent of the offenders' fathers were in the lowest two socio-economic classes" O'Mahony (1997a, 182). While this applies only to Mountjoy Prison, my research sought to establish the pattern for all prisoners involved in higher education, and thus establish a picture that can be compared to the Clancy and Wall's (2000) national picture.

In Table 5.1, we can see that the highest proportion of fathers of third level prison students can be classified in the Skilled Manual (twenty-six percent) and Unskilled Manual (twenty-one percent) categories. When compared to Clancy and Wall's (2000, 8) findings, we can see that the latter is on par with their twenty-two percent, while the former is lower than their thirty-one percent. Yet what this indicates is not a paralleling of Clancy and Wall's (2000, 8) with both categories indicating a low representation rather in the prison context these categories signify a high representation. The lower representations in the prison context come from those groups with the high representation in Clancy and Wall's (2000, 8) research. This is quite clearly seen in the fact that no parent in the prison study can be categorised in the Higher Professional group. On the other hand this is the group with the highest participation rate in Clancy and Wall's (2000, 9) research, displaying an estimated full participation rate (although the authors note that this is an overestimation). Again the discrepancies are clear if we total the numbers for the three social groups, Farmers, Employers and Managers and Higher Professionals, in the prison context we arrive at a representation figure of less than one percent. Yet Clancy and Wall (2000, 9) discovered that seventy-five percent of mainstream students from these groups participate in higher education. Such figures indicate that the prison situation is very far removed from the mainstream; reasons for this are undoubtedly linked to issues of which social classes systematically go to prison in Ireland and which social classes systematically go to university? To discover if this is linked to matters of social exclusion and to see if some basic evidence that imprisonment and social exclusion are intertwined, other

factors, in particular levels of educational attainment pre-first conviction, must be taken into consideration.

If we compare these findings with O'Mahony[9] (1997a, 58-59) we can see that according to him twenty-one percent of fathers of Mountjoy prisoners were placed in the Unskilled Manual Group. Remarkably this is the same percentage found in this research. However other parallels are less clear. O'Mahony (1997a, 58) discovered that less than one percent of fathers were placed in the Skilled Manual category unlike the twenty-six percent found here. In terms of the higher social groupings, O'Mahony (1997a, 58) found that thirteen percent of fathers were placed in those categories. It should be noted that because a different scale of occupational groupings was used by O'Mahony (1997a), I have combined the numbers in the occupational categories 1 and 2 to reach a more comparable result with his findings. The percentage placed in the higher social groups is less than one percent compared to O'Mahony's (1997a, 58) thirteen percent. Once again the findings from the questionnaires deviate from other research findings.

Table 5.1 Fathers' Socio-economic Group



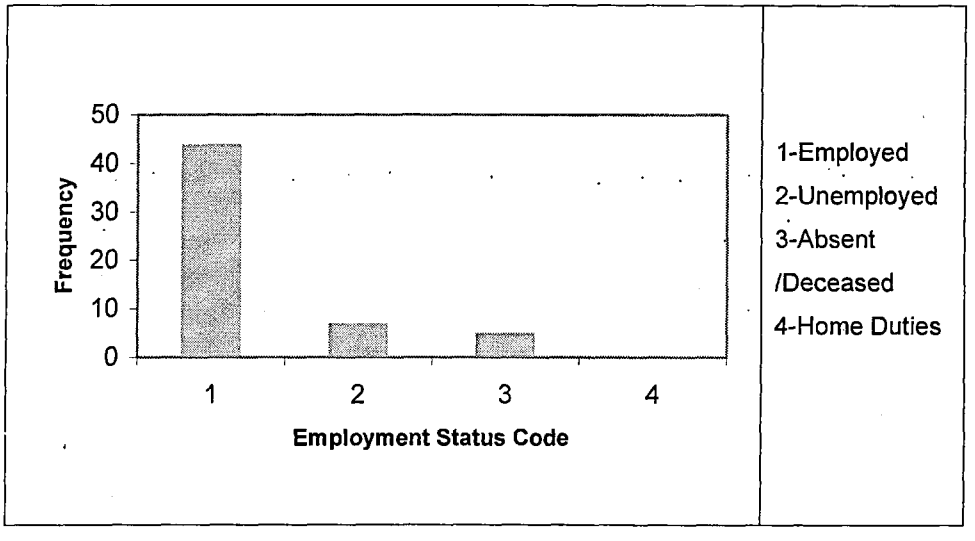
[9] O'Mahony (1997a, 190) used the Medico-Social Research Board's Provisional Irish Social Class Scale to categories and coding the parental occupations. While it differs from the scale used in this research comparison can be drawn and analogies made.

One of the most common means to ascertain parental economic status is to establish the incidence of employment and unemployment. For this reason questions (6) and (8) were included in the questionnaire (Appendix 3). In Table 5.2 which indicates the fathers' employment status, the response codes also included 'absent/deceased' and 'home duties' in order to determine the level of financial support provided by the fathers. From Table 5.2 we can see that the majority of fathers (seventy-eight percent) were usually employed. Yet twelve percent of the fathers with a named occupation were further described as being usually unemployed. A further eight percent were absent or deceased and taken in total, this indicates that twenty percent of fathers were providing no financial support. I found it difficult to profile the students on the basis of the parents' employment or unemployment situations. The difficulties lay in determining the duration of unemployment, their situations prior to being unemployed as well as factors such as informal or partial employment and the basic circumstances underlying unemployment. Such difficulties are not unique to this study, Barry (2000, 16) claims that 'data invisibility' particularly affects the unemployed sector of society; again any future research must carefully consider the most appropriate measurement techniques in light of this.

Returning to the research findings, the contrast with O'Mahony (1997a) is striking in that he discovered that only "nine percent of prisoners had a parent living in the home, who were continuously employed in jobs providing reasonable remuneration" O'Mahony (1997a, 159). Clancy (1995) discovered that the majority (eight-three percent) of new entrants' fathers were classified as employed, a figure comparable with the prison situation. He went on to discover that nine percent were classified as unemployed, again a percentage comparable to the prison situation of twelve percent Clancy (1995, 25). While these figures would seem to indicate comparable rates in terms of the principal employment status, they must be set against the findings outlined in Table 5.1. We can see that while the employment status may be similar, the actual occupation differ considerably. Again the problem of representing those involved in unrecorded and 'unrecordable' areas of economic activities, those prone to

slipping through the cracks of data invisibility, are in evidence here. Finally one notable discrepancy lies between O'Mahony's (1997a, 58) fifteen percent of fathers being described as chronically unemployed and without an occupation, and the fact that in this research none of the respondents described their father as having no occupation and only one percent were categorised as being usually unemployed. I suggest that this is because "men rarely categories themselves, or get categorised as 'engaged in home duties" (Barry, 2000, 15) or that those in partial or informal employment do not neatly fit into traditional concepts of employment status. If such factors are not at play here it seems that the third level prison student is not representative of prisoners in general.

Table 5.2 Fathers' Employment Status

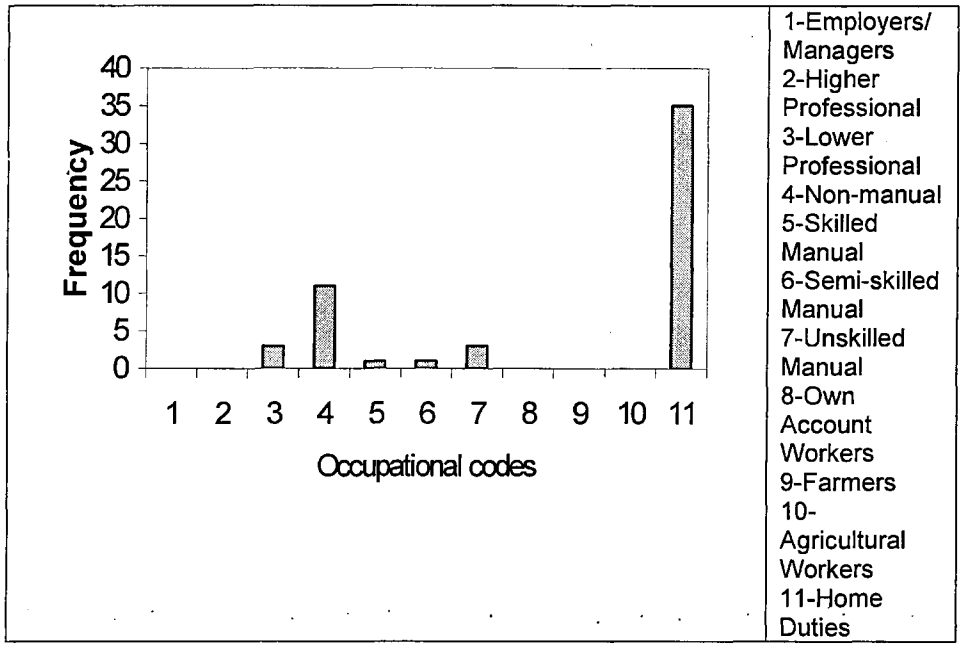


Occupation of mother

Of the mothers about which there was data (the one percent indicated in Table 5.3 being described as either absent or deceased were excluded from the calculations) it was discovered that of those listed as having an occupation outside of the home the majority (twenty percent) were placed in the Non-Manual category. This is similar to Clancy and Walls' (2000, 32) finding that the largest percentage of mothers were categorised also in this group (forty percent). They discovered that less than one third (thirty-two percent) were categorised in the Lower Professional group and in this survey I found that less than six percent were placed in the Lower

Professional (those mentioned being nurses) and Unskilled Manual grouping and a further three and a half percent in the Skilled Manual and Semi-Skilled Manual categories. In order to offset some of the difficulties encountered in attempting to pin down exactly the occupation of either parent, I suggest that future research should request a summary job description.

Table 5.3 Mothers' Socio-economic Group



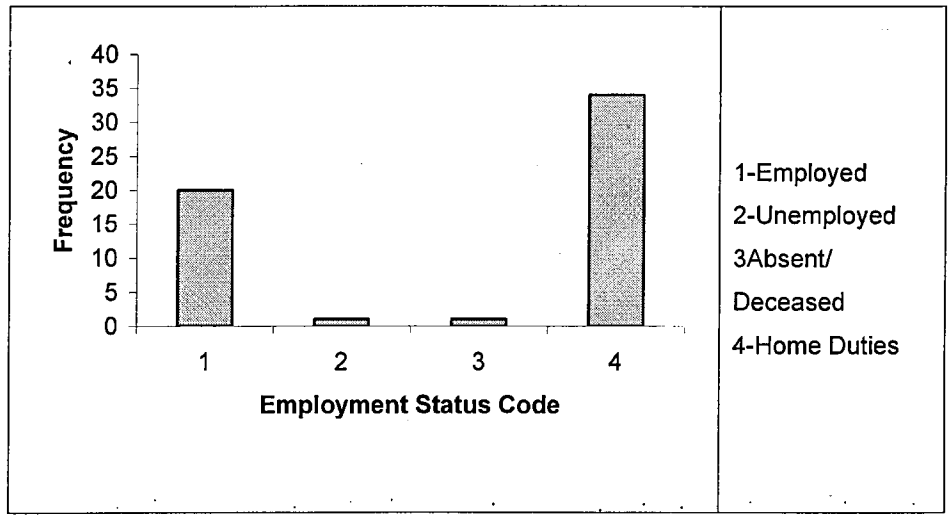
Was she usually employed?

The mothers' employment status was ascertained along the same lines as that of the fathers and is highlighted in Table 5.4. Those described as having an occupation outside of home duties were overwhelmingly usually employed, with less than one percent (four percent) usually unemployed. A slightly larger percentage (five percent) was listed as being either absent or deceased. The vast majority of mothers were described as being employed in home duties with the figure lying at fifty-nine percent. What is of significance is that a further three percent of those mothers described as being employed in home duties were also employed on a part-time basis outside of the home. In general this part-time work was in poorly remunerated unskilled occupations. Here the mothers differed significantly from the fathers, none of whom were described as being employed on a

part-time basis. A larger proportion of fathers (twelve percent) listed as having an occupation were also described as being usually unemployed than mothers listed as having an occupation but usually unemployed (four percent). Again this highlights the notion that key aspects of individuals' and households' economic and social lives are traditionally hidden from view partially due to the underlying assumptions that have informed the collection of such data. This is reinforced by Mullally's (1999) suggestion that "most of the problems and data gaps in gender statistics come from inadequate concepts and definitions used in surveys and censuses. Women are more often than men in situations that are difficult to measure" (Mullally, 1999, 4). In analysing the questionnaires I found this to be the case, particularly confusing was the fact that the mothers' often performed both paid and unpaid work and also tended to be working in the informal sector. If I was to attempt similar research in the future I would be particularly conscious of employing methodologies that adequately reflect the reality and also wary of employing traditional concepts and definitions used in conventional data collection. It would be fair to say that such concepts and definitions can also reveal the ways in which inequality and discrimination can be reproduced systematically in research. Consequently I feel that qualitative methods are just as appropriate to the collection of sensitive and elusive data on specific groups and situations as they are to the exploration of attitudinal data. If I were to reproduce this research or conduct similar research in the future I would favour a more qualitative approach throughout.

Taking both parental occupations together and including any part-time work, sixty-six percent of both parents worked outside the home and in no case was the mother the only working parent other than the small percentage where she was the sole provider.

Table 5.4 Mothers' Employment Status



To briefly summarise the findings so far; the typical third level prison student is a thirty-seven year old male the majority of whose fathers were employed in either semi-skilled or unskilled manual employment and whose mother were listed as being engaged in home duties. The next section examines their educational experiences.

Educational Background of Student Body.

In order to analyse the education background of the students, Clancy (1995) used two criteria; the post primary school attended and the educational attainment of the students at Leaving Certificate level. I have used only the former of these criteria intending to compare along lines of school type but eschewed the latter criterion because I contend that this would not reveal comparable results. This is mainly because prison students rarely take more than three subjects for examination in any one year and their access to third level courses is based on meeting criteria for mature students rather than their Leaving Certificate results. This is regardless of recent media speculation that prison schools outperformed many private and public schools in the 2003 Leaving Certificate examinations. It is simply not true that "accounting for Dublin's prison population, inmates have a higher

percentage chance of going to one of the seven universities than students at more than 100 secondary schools around the country, several of them private schools" (Williams and O'Keeffe, 2003). Returning to Clancy and Wall (2000), they appear to have included questions on the type of schools attended in order to cross-reference the results with other social background related questions and extrapolate on the students' social backgrounds (Clancy and Wall, 2000, 24). Time limitations meant that I was unable to comprehensively link the educational attainment of the prison students with data on their social class, geographical area or other such variables. Instead I attempted to develop a more rounded picture of the prison students' educational rather than social profile. Consequently I decided that a more important factor to be considered than Clancy and Wall's (2000) educational attainment at Leaving Certificate is the level of educational attainment reached since coming to prison. Tables 5.9 and 5.10 indicate the prison students' level of educational attainment pre and post-conviction. This highlighting of both the pre and post-conviction educational situations can indicate the level of influence that prison schooling can bring to bear on the students' motivations. It may also indicate the possible influence of preparation in the Educational Centres, previous positive educational experience, peer inspiration and similar variables on the prison student's pattern of participation. The findings indicate that many third level prison students had a very basic level of educational attainment pre-first conviction.

Age left school

O'Mahony (1997a, 160) claims that of the Mountjoy prisoners "eighty percent had left school before the age of 16." Remarkably my research indicates that the average age at which the third level prison students was also sixteen. Seven percent or four of the sample group had never attended Secondary school, a much smaller grouping than O'Mahony's. This can again be contrasted with O'Mahony's (1997a.182) finding that "only eleven percent of the sample of offenders stayed on in school after the age of 15" which he compared to seventy-one percent of the general population. In this research we can see that sixty-four percent stayed on after the age of fifteen, which does suggest that because the mean age was sixteen, those that left

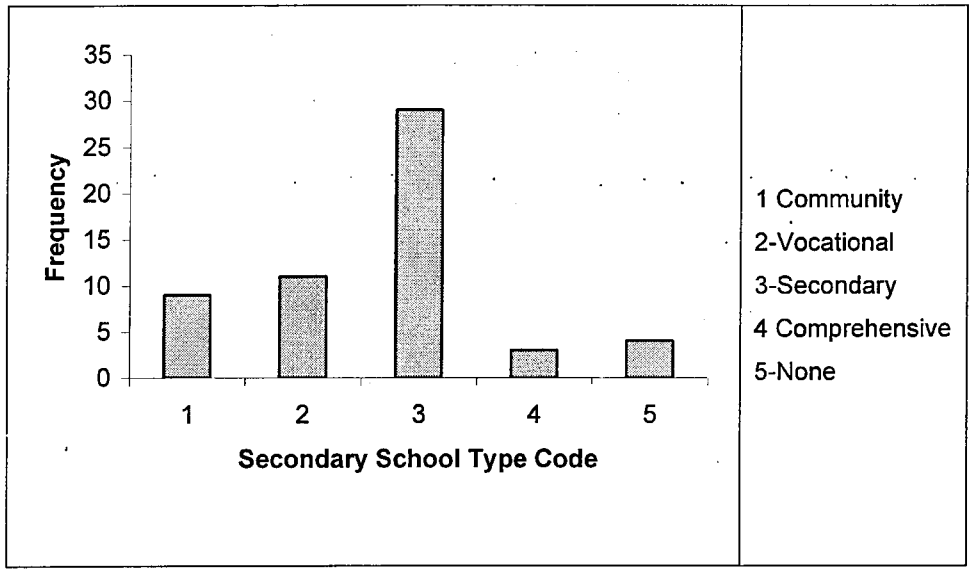
before this age did so at a particularly young age. Indeed eight percent of the group had left school between the ages of eleven and thirteen. Such findings when placed alongside the fact that the mean age of the prison students' was thirty-seven, suggests that many of those involved experienced long gaps in formal education.

Type of school attended

As mentioned earlier the question dealing with the type of school attended was included in order to establish a round picture of the prison students' secondary school education. Table 5.5 indicates that fifty-two percent of the students attended what is classified in Ireland as a Secondary School[10], only one of which is fee paying. Twenty percent attended a Vocational School and sixteen percent attended a Community school. Five percent attended a Comprehensive-type school (all of these students are non-nationals) and seven percent attended no secondary school at all. This figure can be compared to O'Mahony's (1997a, 53) discovery that one third of his sample group had never attended a school higher than primary or special school. This suggests that the pre-first conviction educational level of third level prison students is higher than that of the general Mountjoy prison population. There are no figures available for the total prison population.

[10] There are four types of 'secondary' school in Ireland: Secondary, Vocational, Community and Comprehensive. The majority of Irish children go to Secondary Schools. These are privately owned and managed and often run by religious orders although the teachers in these schools are generally lay staff and employed by the Department of Education. Most Secondary Schools are free but some are fee-paying. Traditionally Secondary Schools tended to have a strong church influence, were single sex and the curriculum offered was more academic than practical. In contrast Vocational Schools are established by the state and placed under the control of the local Vocational Educational Committee (VEC). They are secular, coeducational and tend to be more technical and practical in curriculum. Vocational, Community and Comprehensive schools are all free. Community Schools are also under the control of the VEC's and are modelled on Comprehensive Schools as described below. They evolved as the VEC's response to the development of Comprehensive Schools and have a wider curriculum than either Secondary or Vocational Schools and aim to have a wide intake of pupils of varying levels of ability. Comprehensive Schools are similar to the aforementioned but are denominational. Teaching staff in both types of school are employed by the board of management (Drudy and Lynch, 1993).

Table 5.5 Type of Secondary School Attended



General experience of and attitudes to school

Because the range of ages at which the sample group had left school was so broad, I felt it was important to establish a comprehensive picture of their general school experiences. As seen in Table 5.6, at twenty percent a large number had changed secondary school, while Table 7 indicates if they had done so voluntarily or for other reasons. Comparable figures for change of schools do not appear to be available from either O'Mahony (1997a, 1993) or Clancy (1995, 2001). Yet it would seem to this researcher that the proportion outlined above is rather high in relation to mainstream Secondary students. The significance of such figures can really only be understood once it is established why so many prison students changed Secondary School. From Table 5.7 we can see that a large number (thirteen percent) had been expelled from Secondary School. Four percent of the student body had been compelled to leave school in order to find work and a further two had simply changed school as their families had relocated to another area. Five percent of the respondents stated they had changed school because 'they wanted to' with no other reasons given.

Table 5.6 Changed Secondary School

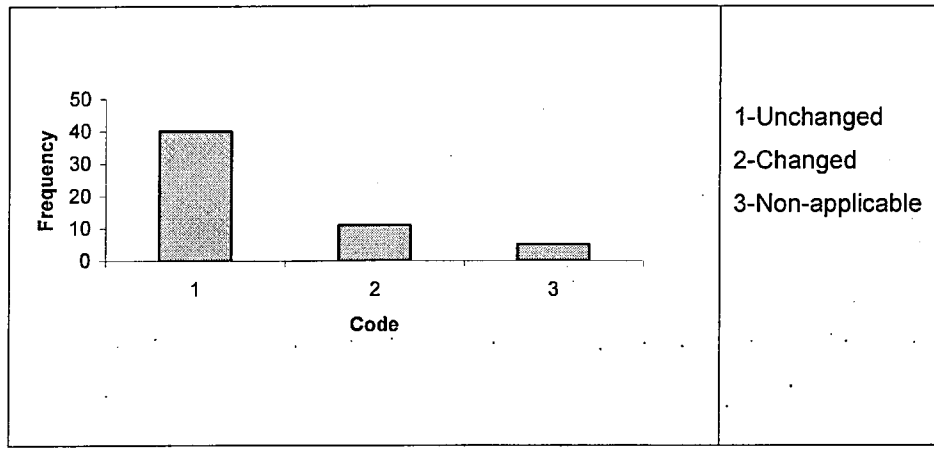
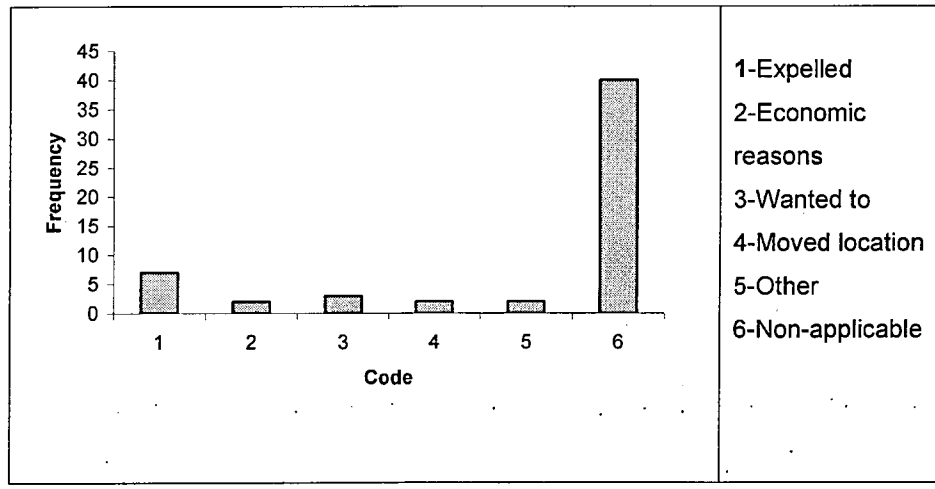


Table 5.7 Reasons for Changing Secondary School



Without doubt a student's performance at school is influenced hugely by their personal attitude to their schooling experiences. The decision to continue with the educational process on completion of secondary level education and the decision to return to education as an adult is undoubtedly influenced by the schooling experiences and attitude to education as demonstrated in Chapter 2. Question 12 of the Questionnaire (Appendix 3) attempts to determine how the student body felt about their experience of schooling pre-first conviction. We can see from Table 5.8 that it was almost evenly weighted between those that had a positive remembrance (forty-five percent) of their time at school and those forty one percent that a negative

attitude. A surprisingly small number had mixed feelings (five percent) and nine percent made no comment. The small number that indicated mixed feelings would suggest that whatever the attitude of the prison student, that attitude was held strongly by them. Such clear–cut feelings are in evidence in the following quotations taken from the individual interviews with some of the students:

> "While I hated the fact that it was so exam-orientated and the compulsion to attend, it proved a good outlet for making friends as well as having a purpose in life and some order and discipline"

> "I had no interest in school from day one"

> "Although I left school early, the reasons for this apply to family rather than school itself. I loved school"

> "My experiences were of constant beatings, being dragged around the place by the hair and having to endure such vicious behaviour in front of not only my classmates but often the whole school in the exercise yard."

> "I never liked school, couldn't wait to leave. Then I left and found that work wasn't much better and I tried to get back into school but couldn't because they said that I had left for too long."

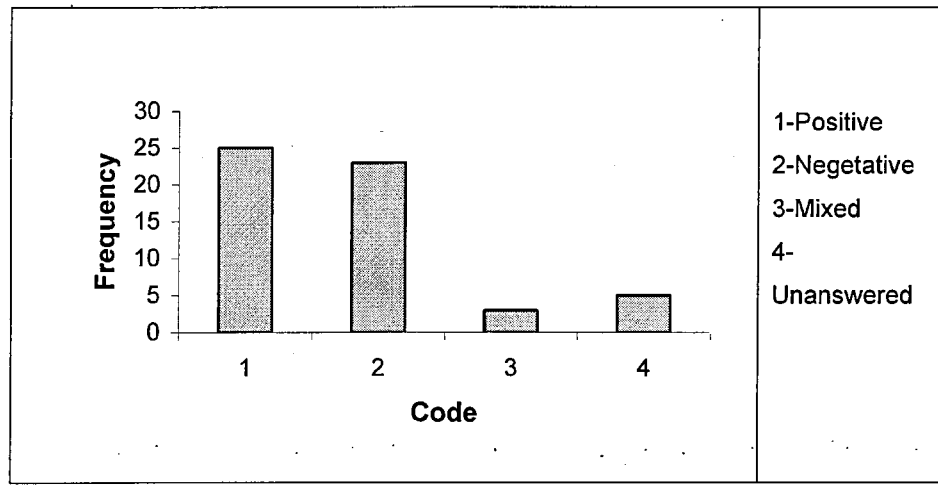
> "I loved every minute of school, they really were the best days of my life."

> "I never got anything from school, it taught me nothing, I'm self-educated through library books"

While such strong feelings can impact both negatively and positively on participation rates at all levels of the educational process, Drudy and Lynch (1993) note that adult participants were more likely to have a positive view

of their own schooling. In hindsight an additional question that I should have asked was, "had your attitude to schooling changed since embarking on third level study?" Hints of possible answers to this can be found later in this chapter in the section dealing with motivation.

Table 5.8 Attitude to Schooling

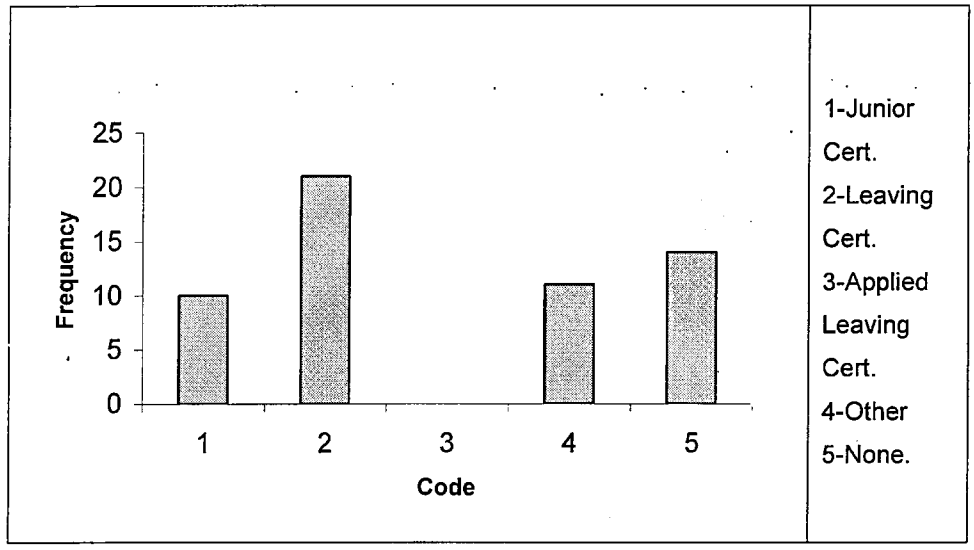


State examinations sat pre- first conviction

In his study O'Mahony (1997a, 160) had discovered that "only about a quarter of the prisoners had taken any form of public examination and in many cases these examinations were taken through the prison education system." According to him "a tiny four percent of Mountjoy prisoners had progressed to the Leaving Certificate level or beyond, again mostly through the prison education system." In stark contrast O'Mahony (1997a, 160) compared this with national levels for the same year and indicated that nationally almost eighty percent of secondary students progressed to the Leaving Certificate. It thus seemed pertinent that this particular research identified the numbers of third level prison students that had attained the Leaving Certificate, or its equivalent, pre and post their first conviction. Table 5.9 highlights that eighteen percent of students had progressed only as far as Junior Certificate level (or equivalent) before first coming to prison. A further thirty-eight percent had reached Leaving Certificate Level (or equivalent). A total of fifty-five percent of third level prison students had

sat at least one state examination before their first prison sentence. Of the remainder of the respondents, a very high twenty-five percent had taken no state examinations (either Junior Certificate, Leaving Certificate or any of their equivalents) and the remaining twenty percent had taken some form of state examination in their home countries, each of which were of Leaving Certificate standard. The one-quarter of students that had taken no state examination pre first conviction when placed alongside the nine percent of students had never attended Secondary School, suggests that of those that had attended Secondary School, seventeen percent had never sat any state examinations and thus left school with no formal qualifications. This finding might be of interest to the Open University as they promote their aim to encourage students with no formal qualification to embark on third level study.

Table 5.9 Second Level Educational Attainment Pre-first Conviction

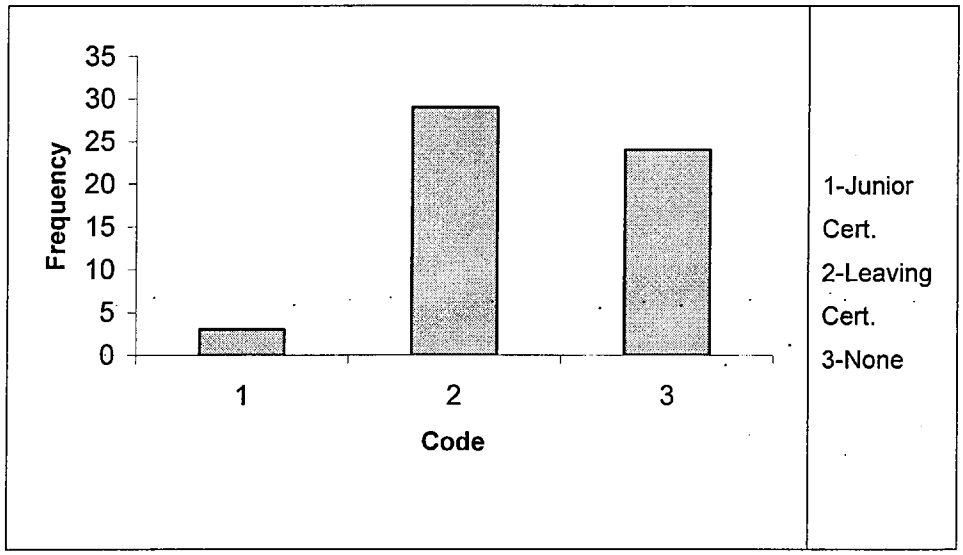


State examinations sat while in prison:

The number of third level prison students that had taken no state examinations since coming to prison is high at forty-three percent, considering it is generally a prerequisite that they have either sat the Leaving Certificate before coming to prison, or since then, in order to be considered for sponsorship for third level study. Of those that had sat only

the Junior Certificate (five percent) and/or the Leaving Certificate (fifty-two percent) while in prison, it would appear that some of those had already taken either or both of these state examinations pre-conviction. It could be assumed that the forty-three percent who had not sat examinations while in prison include some of the sixty-one percent that had taken either the Leaving Certificate or an equivalent pre-conviction. From the responses it is impossible to ascertain if any of the third level students had never sat a state examination either within prison or beyond, as it is known that some had sat state examinations while in prison, some had sat state examinations before coming to prison and some had sat both. It would be a good idea if future research could accurately pin down those that had sat Leaving Certificate either before or while in prison in order to map their subsequent academic progress.

Table 5.10 State Examinations Taken in Prison



Third level education pre-first conviction:

Considering that many of the third level prison students had no formal academic qualification before coming to prison it was interesting to examine the experiences of those that had formal qualifications. Table 5.11 highlights the fact that seventy-three percent of third level prison students had no third level academic qualifications before coming to prison, which means for these students this is their first experience of studying at third

level. By academic qualification is meant any type of degree or diploma from a recognised higher education institution or university. Just over twenty-five percent of students had some form of formal academic qualification before beginning their first prison sentence, and Table 5.11 also denotes the breakdown of awards held by those students. The one student who had attained a certificate noted that this was a teaching certificate, which is the equivalent of a degree level teaching qualification and is thus included here. The types of diplomas gained by five percent of the students are two in Theology and one in Business Management. One other student had attained a postgraduate degree collecting quite a few undergraduate degrees along the way before coming to prison. The fields of study in which the varying degrees, diplomas and certificates were gained include the following: Commerce/Business Studies, Arts/Humanities, Science, Engineering, Fine Art, Social Science, Theology, Education and Technology/Computing. Table 5.12 outlines the numbers of students relative to each discipline and we can thus see that a broad representation of disciplines is denoted here.

Table 5.11 Third Level Education Attainment Pre-first Conviction

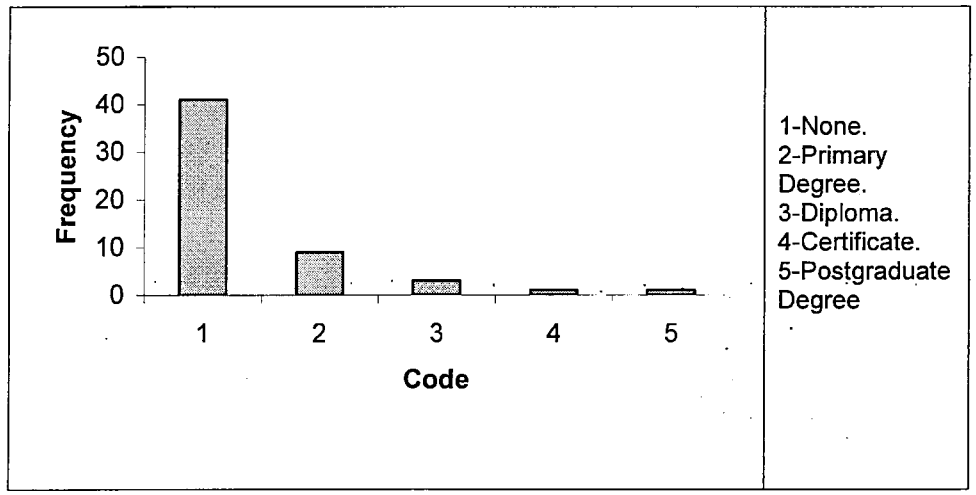


Table 5.12 Field of Study Undertaken Pre-first Conviction

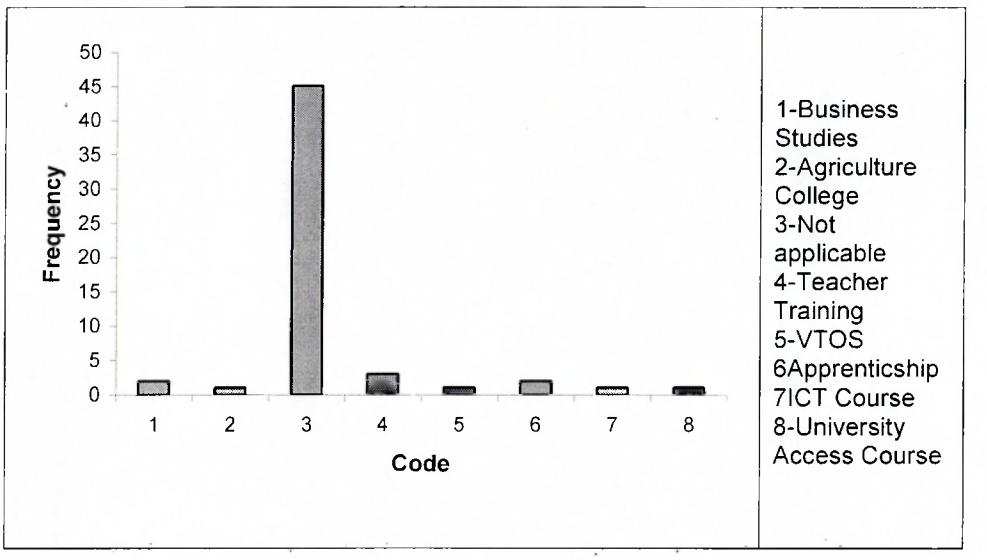
Field of Study/Discipline	Number of students
Arts/Humanities	5
Commerce/Business Studies	4
Science	2
Social Science	2
Theology	2
Technology/Computing	1
Fine Art	1
Engineering	1
Education	1

Adult/second chance education pre-first conviction

Of those students that had not undertaken any formal academic courses pre-conviction (seventy-three percent), it was important to determine if they had undertaken any courses at all since leaving school. Questions 17(a), 17(b) and (18) attempted to seek that information by asking the students to outline what qualifications and/or adult education courses they had taken pre first-conviction. Thus it was established that eighty two percent had not taken any adult education or post Leaving Certificate courses pre-first conviction. This large percentage includes those students who had taken third level courses. It was found that seventeen percent of the prison students had undertaken some form of adult learning other than formal academic courses before coming to prison. A categorisation of the type of courses is indicated in Table 5.13. Again there is no significant discernable pattern and it would appear that the prison students' choice of Post-Leaving Certificate courses is as eclectic as that of the general population. Of particular note is the very small number of students (four percent) that had attended any form of second chance education and/or adult learning programme such as

Vocational Training Opportunity Course (VTOS) or a University Access Course. It would thus seem that those that left school without progressing to any form of further education rarely considered returning to education before coming to prison

Table 5.13 Adult/Second Chance Education Pre-first Conviction



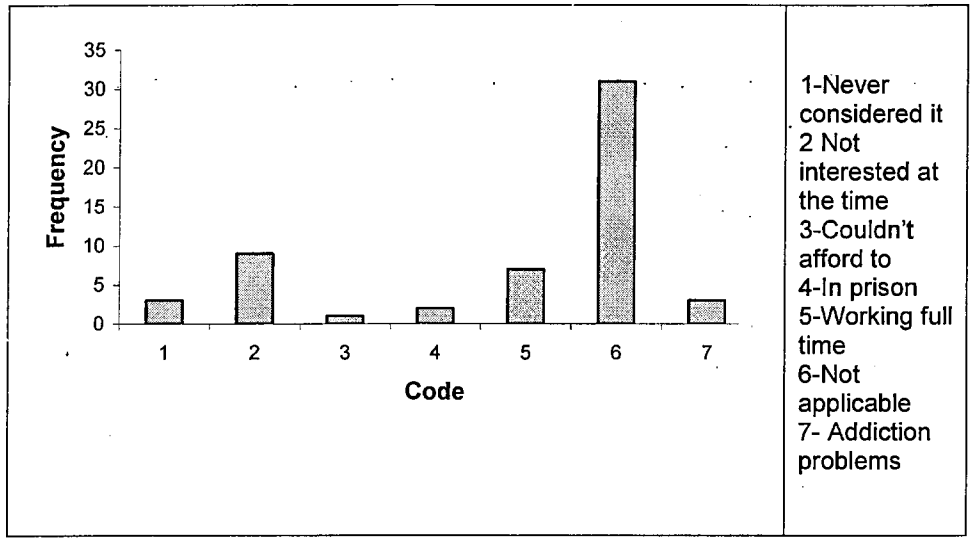
Reasons for not studying at third level pre-first conviction

Of those students who had not undertaken any form of formal third level academic education, it was asked why was this the case? The largest majority (sixteen percent) simply stated that they were not interested at the time. A slightly smaller percentage (thirteen percent) stated that they were working full time and earning money or providing for their families and thus full-time study was not an option. As one student stated in the individual interview:

> "The reasons I didn't complete any course after leaving school was because I thought that I would not be able for them. Also I had a family and had got used to having money in my pocket, and to go back to studying for something that in the end I might not even pass was too big of a chance to take."

Five percent stated that they just never considered it while an equal percentage stressed that they were too caught up in addiction problems to really consider anything. Others claimed they could not afford to and some were in prison from such a young age that they were unable to undertake any third level study outside the prison walls. What is particularly interesting is that when they were asked would they have undertaken third level study if they had the opportunity to do so, forty five percent replied that they would have, while twenty-five percent replied in the negative. Two percent replied 'maybe'. It would thus seem that in hindsight, and with their additional educational experiences to date, many more prison students would have considered undertaken third level academic courses pre-first conviction if it was possible for them to have done so. Perhaps this could go some way towards answering the unasked questioned raised earlier, if their attitude to education had changed now that they were embarked on third level study?

Table 5.14 Reasons for No Third Level Education Pre-first Conviction



Type of third level course being studied at present

Table 5.15 indicates the breakdown along Fields of Study/Disciplines of the third level prison students. Perhaps the most striking figure in this Table is that forty-one percent of students are studying for a degree in Information Technology and Computing. It is striking because computer facilities are

restricted within the Prison Education Service and access to the Internet is strictly limited due to security considerations. Nonetheless prison students with the help of the Education Centres are overcoming this substantial obstacle and emulating national trends. According to the DES's Report of the Task Force on the Physical Sciences (2002), the majority of new entrants to third level science courses are studying a Computer Science or Information Technology (ICT) course. Clancy (2001) placed this figure at twenty-six percent of all new entrants to third level education. This trend is not unique to Ireland, an UK-wide survey on adult participation in education found that a quarter of all those surveyed were studying some form of ICT course (Sargent, 2000). As seen in Chapter 2, nationally and internationally Governments promote and encourage participation in such courses and it would seem that while prison students are physically isolated from society they are well tuned in to its trends.

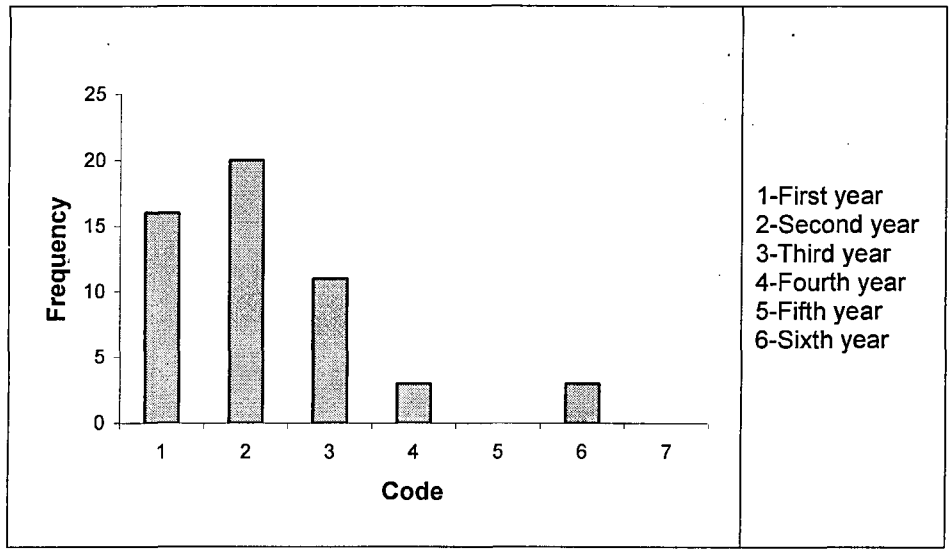
Table 5.15 Present Field of Study

Discipline	**Number of students**	**Percentage**
Information Technology/Computing	25	41%
Modern Languages	8	13%
Technology	6	10%
Social Science	6	10%
Humanities	6	10%
Mathematics	5	9%
Science	4	7%

Year of study

Table 5.16 shows the year of study in which the respondents were involved during the academic year 2001 – 2002. From this we can establish that the majority are in either their first or second year of third level study. The high proportion in the initial years of study could indicate that some students go on to complete their third level courses after their release from prison and are thus under-represented in this research study. Or perhaps some students never complete the course, stopping after two or three years of study. As the average age is thirty-seven, this means that many prison students will not have attained their degree until their early forties.

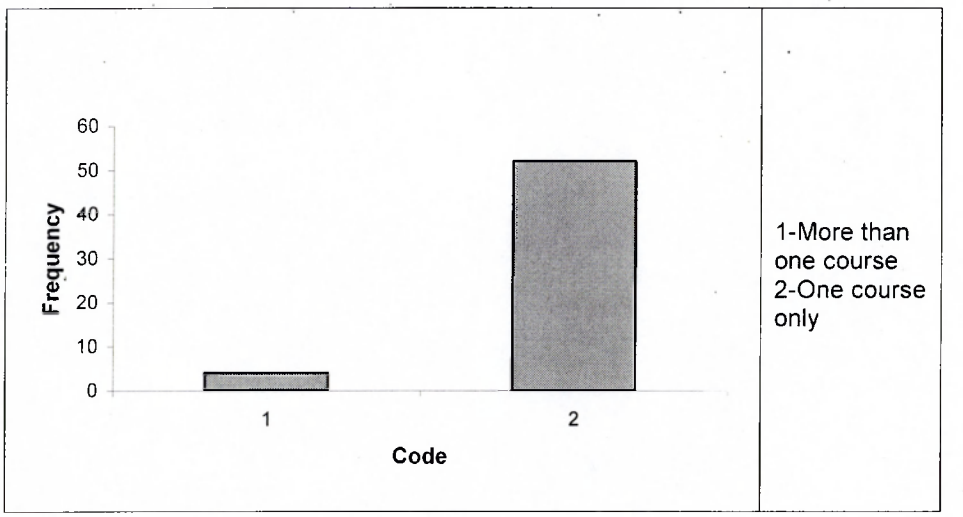
Table 5.16 Present Year of Study



Undertaking other third level courses:

Of those students who responded to the questionnaire ninety three percent were only doing one third level course during the academic year 2001 - 2002. Seven percent were taking two courses; this was equally divided between those taking an additional half credit Open University course and those taking an Extra-Mural Course in Social Science from the National University of Ireland, Maynooth. Table 5.17 provides a graphical representation of these figures.

Table 5.17 Undertaking More Than One Course



It should be noted that not all of the questions asked in the questionnaire have been included in this analysis. Some of those questions merely served to focus and structure the semi-structured individual interviews and provided guidelines for more elaborate and detailed questioning during the interviews.

Synopsis of questionnaire findings

In the introduction to this thesis I stated that one of the aims of this study was to counterbalance the widespread tendency to generalise the prison population and lump prisoners into homogeneous groups. Ironically in this instance generalisation of the typical third level student has proven essential to increase our understanding of the profile of prisoners engaged in third level study. While I am cognisant of the dangers of slipping into prejudicial and stereotypical thinking, I believe that the depiction of the typical third level student is necessary to increase understanding as quickly as possible. Thus to conclude this section, the typical third level prison student is a thirty-seven year old male. His mother was engaged primarily in home duties and his father was employed as a semi-skilled or unskilled manual worker. Having had a generally positive experience of school, he left at the

age of sixteen and has sat the Leaving Certificate either in prison or before being sentenced. He is presently engaged in the first or second year of a primary degree and most likely to be taking an ICT-related course. Yet such generalisations can cloud the picture and the problem with this picture of the typical third level student is that it is not in fact a reasonable fit for many of the students. This is apparent if we examine some of the contradictions evident in the description. For example the student left school at sixteen but has completed the Leaving Certificate. Similarly while he is now thirty-seven years old, he is involved in the initial stages of an academic career. Such anomalies and the deviations from the archetype of a considerable number of the so-called typical characteristics of the students has forced me to distinguish between two types of typical third level prison student. Thus it is more accurate to suggest that two types of 'typical student' emerge and I have labelled these as 'traditional participants' and 'traditional non-participants'. Because each type are poles apart their artificial merging through statistical analysis is liable to produce the confusing composite figure described above, which while useful is a mere generalisation. While each group differs there are prime commonalities evident. The next section, which outlines the motivation for study as described by the students, indicates if motivational factors differ between each group. In so doing the relationship between the demographic profile of an individual, prisoner or otherwise, and their attitude to participation in education is grasped more firmly.

5.3 The Interviews Analysed

There was a significant level of consistency in the descriptions of motivating factors for third level study as outlined by the students. While there was much overlap a fundamental distinction between the types of motivations emerged. Accordingly I have classified the motivations into two distinct and broad categories; those identifiable with push factors and those identifiable with pull factors. This conceptualisation of push and pull factors is traditionally used to describe the reasons why people migrate. For example the push factors behind people migrating in the developing world

from rural area to urban areas would be such factors as local famine, war or religious persecution while the pull factors could be dreams of cities paved with gold, demand for cheap labour or better job opportunities. I believe this is an appropriate analogy to employ for the prison situation. For many of the interviewed students there was a sense of journeying, of migrating emotionally, academically and psychologically. When describing their motivations for study many used expressions such as to "leave that behind", "move on", "get away from all that" and "start a new life". More pertinently I think the use of push and push factors is apt in that many of the motivations offered were unique to the prison context and can be recognised as emerging from a need to get away from mind-numbing prison life (push factors), or alternatively to prepare for life on release (pull factors).

As Forster (1990) discovered motivations could change as the prisoners advance along their academic journey and while a student's initial motivation may have been embedded in push factors his continuing motivations could have evolved into a pull factor. This was discovered also in this study. It should be noted that while the motivations offered by the two types of typical third level prison student could be placed into either category, in general the younger, educational disadvantaged student, (the traditional non-participant) was motivated initially by push factors, while the older, more educationally advantaged student (the traditional participant) was influenced by pull factors. This is hardly surprising, as the more experienced student knows well the advantages afforded by education, see the benefits and is easily pulled into the possibility of continuing with his interrupted study or upgrading his qualifications. The more educationally disadvantaged sees little long term benefit from third level study and often embarks on an academic career simply to lessen boredom or "have something to do". As seen in Chapter 2 such motivations are not unique to prisoners, yet the influence of the prison context is the driving force. The highly qualified student may never have considered changing his career focus unless forced to because of his prison record, while the educationally disadvantaged could have continued happily with his life never considering returning to education without having had so much free time to fill.

The remainder of this chapter is divided into the following subheadings; the push factors, the pull factors and motivational categories. The latter breaks down the varying motivating factors into interrelated categories. It outlines also how frequently each student quoted aspects of these categories during the interviews. This basic statistical exercise indicates the most commonly listed motivations and at a glance provides the opportunity to view commonalities and disparities.

The push factors

Without doubt most of the push factors described by the students were unique to the prison context, directly influenced by it and similar to those described by Forster (1990, 17). The most frequent response to the question why did you start third level study was to escape from boredom. A sample of such responses is listed below.

> "The only reason I'm studying is to kill the boredom, that's the only benefit I can see."

> "When I first came here, I was never in prison before, I found time was dragging, I didn't know anyone or what to do, then I got work on the landings, got to know the place so I didn't need to fill up the time so much. Now I do it for myself, to get a sense of satisfaction, I'm not looking at the end, at a degree, but each step on the way is an achievement in itself."

> "Study is an alternative, a great consumer of time"

> "It's a great time passer and you're using your time constructively. You're locked up for nearly eighteen hours a day and even if reading fiction is enjoyable, third level study is more satisfying and there's an end result."

"Everyday in prison is the same, same people, same old routine, same old stories, I figured this would be different, something different, a change from the same old things."

"Time moves faster when you're studying."

While it could be argued that each of the motivational factors listed by the students is directly influenced by the prison context, it would seem that the boredom factor, is particularly unique. Every prisoner interviewed mentioned the boredom factor in particular that "it fills up" the evenings. This is not surprising as Irish prisoners, except those in pre-release or open prisons, are locked in their cell each evening at seven thirty. Time hangs heavily on their hands and any activity that occupies that time is welcomed. During the day prison life is strictly regimented, ordered and routine, and again any activity that might break up this routine is welcomed and seen "as a revolt against the monotony of prison life" (Forster, 1990, 18). One notable difference between this study and Forster's (1990) is that the latter found many prisoners used higher education as an opportunity to avoid some specific aspect of prison routine. There was no evidence of this in the accounts of the Irish prisoners. It is not applicable as few Irish prisoners are forced or obliged to undertake an activity on a daily basis. While the prison authorities encourage involvement in some activity, many Irish prisoners ironically experience unstructured days. If a prisoner so chooses, he can spend the day in the gym or in the school or in the recreation hall watching television. It is thus not surprising that all the respondents named the alleviation of boredom as a prime motivational factor.

Other push factors as outlined by the students involved wanting to escape from particular aspects rather than activities of prison life; the drug culture ripe in many prisons being a prime example.

"I was sick of sitting around listening to all the drug talk, non-stop, banging on every hour of the day, it was wrecking me head."

"There was no way I wouldn't be back on the gear if I didn't start doing something, I'd always looked forward to the school, there was a bit of crack up there."

"Why would I work in prison, never did on the outside and I'm not starting now, not for that lot anyway."

"It would drive you to drugs they way they do be going on, who has it, how do you get more, when did they get it, who short-changed you, who would divvy it up? That was it with the old bit of footie thrown in."

"I was doubled-up with this fella and all he did was think about and talk about drugs and robbing. But then I could tell him I had an essay to do and he'd shut up most of the time."

"It's better than work-training."

"I've no intention of working for the prison, making money for them, listening to warders telling me what to do all day, no matter how much they'd pay me."

While the prime push factor is to alleviate boredom, the borderline with pull factors is blurred as the interviewed students chose third level education over other prison activities in order to use their time constructively. It would seem that it was not enough just to alleviate the boredom it made more sense to so by engaging in a worthwhile activity. In a similar vein Duguid (1997, 59) briefly alludes to prisoner motivation for third level study and states "university programmes proved useful to long-term and/or maximum security inmate who seemed to find it ego-gratifying and thus use it to constructively occupy time." Unlike their North American counterparts, none of the Irish prison students suggested that they found third level study ego gratifying. Rather eight-four percent of respondents stated that they were motivated by a sense of personal achievement.

"It opens you up, it's adding to your knowledge and making you know more and question more, it makes you more than a junkie or whatever, a robber or a scumbag that others might think.....I've learnt a lot of things and how it's alright to know things and explain yourself."

"I never thought I could do anything like this, I know now I'm as good as anybody."

"It's much easier than I thought it would be or maybe I'm better than I thought I was"

"No-one, not even me thought I could do this but I can and I'm good at it."

" I like the challenge, getting the TMA's in"

"Studying has given me a more positive spin on things. I feel I can do anything I want to now. I'm looking forward to using it when I get out."

"I want to better myself, my father often used to go on at me about going back to school. My whole family is university-educated. This is my chance to be like them."

This sense of personal achievement was particularly strong among the younger, educationally disadvantaged group. They cited it as one of the prime reasons for continuing with their third level study. The other group also mentioned it frequently and perhaps it is tied in with the idea of doing something worthwhile while in custody.

The pull factors

The primary pull factor was simply to get a job after release. While both groups cited this factor, the younger, less educationally advantaged students

felt it was not as important as alleviating boredom, but "was a handy thing to do."

> "The major perk of getting a degree is contributing to the workforce when I leave prison. I think the degree will stand to me and help me get a good job."

> "It's going to be hard enough getting a job with a criminal record but harder still without a good qualification. It's a good reason for getting a degree while in prison, the Open University is recognised by everybody, internationally even. I'd have to go away to get a job I'd say."

> "It should help me getting a job, studying psychology should help me to understand things I didn't before, understand kids behaviour who have been traumatized at an early age, I'd like to work with them and the degree and my time in prison might be working in my favour."

Interestingly the Mountjoy students involved in the pilot study and some of the other traditional non-participants were less enthusiastic about the possibility of getting employment. In fact some of them were quite adamant that they did not want to work when released. Most would like to continuing studying instead.

> "There's no way I'm working in some menial job for little pay, I wouldn't do it before I had a degree and I certainly won't do it when I get one."

When asked did he think the degree would get him a good, highly paid job, he replied;

> "The like of me doesn't get that kinda job, even if I wanted it. Would you give me one?"

Other students when confronted with similar question suggested;

"I wouldn't mind the work part but it's the other stuff that goes with it that would kill me; being on time, take holidays when you're told to, Monday mornings, bowing to the boss and so on. Instead I'd like to be a student, to use my head to think to prove myself that way."

"I've no interest in that kind of work - although the money would be handy. I'd prefer to work in my local area, you know some kind of community activism, put the degree to good use."

What was interesting also about this group is that they were determined to resist the potential for social class identity change afforded by higher education. Their comments suggested that while they were re-inventing themselves as third level students, reflecting on past experiences from the perspective of this new position and adjusting their cultural identities accordingly, they wanted their social class identity to remain static even while their educational and cultural identities were changing. In short they were aiming to avoid cultural suicide, or enculturation by suffocation as it is referred to sometimes.

"I know some people think I'm different now that I'm getting a degree but I'm not really and I want go home to where I came from even if I do get a job or go on to do a masters."

"I tried college when I got out the last time but I didn't fit in, I knew as much as them, more in fact, but the lecturers were not like me, too middle-class for me and the students were worse, they're from another planet altogether."

"If I get a degree I can have any job I want but I just don't want those jobs."

"degree or no degree, when I get out I'm going back to truck driving. There's plenty of educated truck drivers out there

you know. Won't the hitch hikers be surprised when I let it slip I've a B. Sc?"

Returning to motivations, the majority of the students frequently mentioned making constructive use of the time spend in prison as a prime motivation.

"I was 15 months on remand with no access to school or anything, the library once a week and I've a long sentence to do, 14 years, there's no point in me coming in and going out the same. I was doing alright in my job before here but now I want to improve myself and do something worthwhile."

"For once I'm doing something positive in the hope that my time spent here is not a complete waste of time."

"I used to see education as a way to break free from a life of crime, now it's merely a method of passing time but at least it's a useful and respected one."

When asked why he no longer felt education could help him break free of crime he relied.

"I used to when I started first, but sure once a criminal always a criminal, you can have as many degrees as you want but you'll never live the working life. I'm too old to change, to bother. Why would I? You can take the prisoner out of the yard but you can never take the prison mentality away."

Lastly a small number of students were candid in stating that taking a degree while in prison would help their case when they appeared before the parole board.

"It's a lot of hassle studying here but it will help my case when I go back before the judge."

When asked to explain, he replied,

> "Oh to be seen to be doing something worthwhile with your time, using your time wisely and all that. Sure it would have to impress him, I hope so. It won't do me any harm anyway."

> "It'll be handy for my appeal, to show that I'm thinking about the future and working towards a qualification."

Another student declared bluntly that one of his reasons was for studying was,

> "To subvert the aims of the court, they think they're putting me down but I'm the one getting a degree"

While another claimed he was doing it.

> "To annoy the authorities and look down on officers."

I find it interesting that some students, such as the last two quoted, responded with what could be seen as flippancy or insolence. I would suggest that this should in no way detract from their sincerity. Rather it serves to highlight the complexity of factors that motivates prison students while simultaneously providing a timely reminder that human motivations are not always as expected.

Perhaps the last word should be left to one particular student who summaries succinctly the complexity of factors at work.

> "My motivations for studying in prison are many; the combination of boredom, wanting to please others and restore some of their pride in yourself, an awareness that your offspring may someday look to you for assistance with their studies, being conscious of your own ignorance and lack of knowledge, a stubborn streak which keeps you going

> in the face of adversity or when told you're not capable, wanting to keep your head down and get on with things quietly, as a means of escape, anything to keep your mind focused and as far removed from reality as possible, to promote a sense of self-confidence, to experience the pleasure of learning and gaining knowledge simply for its own sake, not to mention costing the authorities money."

This detailed quotation describes aptly the many motivations for participation furnished during the interviews and encapsulates both the push and pull factors most frequently cited by the students. I feel it is pertinent because it comes from a student who would have been considered a traditional non-participant due to his pre-first conviction educational record and socio-economic background, but who had at the time of the interview almost completed his primary degree while in prison and was applying to commence a Masters degree the following year. In this way he could be seen to have been a real success story, the type of student who through his participation in prison education came to dispel his negative attitude to learning and prepare a positive path for his release. Yet his final comment is most telling, the fact that he wanted to 'cost the authorities money' denotes that he retains a recalcitrant attitude to imprisonment and regardless of the possible benefits that may accrue to him from participation in education, the impact of imprisonment on his attitudes and outlook simmers closely beneath the surface.

It would seem that in many cases regardless of any positive impact education may have on a prisoner's life, this could be offset by the negative impact of imprisonment itself. Perhaps the most prison education can hope for is the ability to lessen somewhat the negative and damaging effects of imprisonment. The response of this student indicates that each individual, be they in prison or not, is motivated by a unique personal set of factors which serve the individual in ways other than the most evident ones. In his study of inmates, Goffman (1974) considers such motivations "to demonstrate to the practitioner if no one else, that he has some selfhood and personal autonomy beyond the grasp of the organisation" (Goffman, 1974, 275). Thus we can see that the student's response is itself a response to the

position in which he has found himself and this type of 'secondary adjustment' to institutionalisation as described by Goffman (1974) is common to prison life. Its impact on the aims and role of prison education is an area that warrants further research.

Motivational categories

As can be seen from many of the quotations listed above, that while the students' responses varied, in general they were remarkably similar. This allowed me group the responses into eight categories as indicated in Appendix 6. The eight categories are (1) to alleviate boredom, (2) to promote a sense of self-development, (3) to harbour a sense of personal achievement, (4) to improve their employment prospects on release, (5) to make their families proud, (6) to make constructive use of time spent in prison, (7) to help their case when back in court and (8) to purse old interests or develop new ones. These can be compared with the motivational categories for mature students as outlined by Lynch (1997) and discussed earlier. Two of her categories; those of second chance students and those satisfying personal fulfilment factors appear to draw from similar motivations as proffered by the traditional non-participants in this study. Her other two categories of those seeking to update their education or re-enter employment, and those studying work related courses appear similar to this study's traditional participants. While there are obvious similarities, what is most notable is that the differences are due generally to the direct impact of the prison context.

As seen the prison students' most frequently cited reasons were to alleviate boredom coupled with promoting a sense of self-development. It could be argued that such motivations are closely aligned with those of Lynch's (1997) students that were seeking to satisfy personal fulfilment factors, but I would suggest that they are more inline with Forster's (1990) view of prison students attempting to break free of the constraints of prison life. For me the prison context is the over-riding factor and I would suggest further that the prison students are engaging in 'removal activities' as defined by Goffman (1974). Such activities are "undertakings that provide something for the individual to lose himself in, temporarily blotting out all sense of the

environment which, and in which, he must abide" (Goffman, 1974, 271). If this is as common to all institutions as suggested by Goffman's (1974) essays and Forster's (1990) findings, then it is a factor that can and should be exploited by prison educators as it can prove a positive experience for the student when coupled with the opportunity for self-development.

While not every prison student stated that they were hoping to nurture a sense of self-development, the majority suggested that third level study would in some way improve their personal development. When asked to elaborate, few were forthcoming with any tangible examples, rather they hinted at achieving affective and emotional development through enhanced self-confidence, self-esteem and in particular a sense of self-achievement. Again participation in prison education based on critical reflection could be useful to such students to enable them to reflect on their experiences and describe their emotions. The development of a sense of personal achievement loomed large in the students' experiences and in many cases was closely tied into 'making their families proud'. This would seem to dispel the commonly held notion that most prisoners are 'career criminals' who view periods of imprisonment as mere 'hazards of the trade'. None of those interviewed seemed to view their imprisonment lightly and most suggested that gaining a degree could work towards lessen the negative impact of imprisonment on their families and themselves. Furthermore this notion was tied in closely to both using their time constructively and pursuing old interests or developing new ones. It is important to note that each group related self-development to a sense of self or personal achievement rather than a new skill that may improve their employment prospects. In other words, their personal development was for themselves rather than for external factors, which would perhaps indicate that it was indeed occurring.

Of all the motivational categories listed that which distinguishes most the two types of student typified in this study is their belief in the ability of third level study to improve their employment prospects. The older, educationally advantaged, 'traditional participants' firmly believed this to be the case. This is ironic in light of the fact that many from this category were imprisoned for sexual offences and it would seem to this researcher that this

category is the least likely to be viewed positively by potential employers. It seems to me that the 'traditional non-participants' held a more realistic view of their employment prospects. While most of this group suggested that it might help them somewhat to gain work, the majority felt that a degree was unnecessary for the type of jobs that would be available to them because of their criminal records. Indeed many did not want to work on their release, having never worked, or having worked only in low paid unskilled jobs, their attitude to employment was as negative as their initial attitude to education had been. The question of the role of prison education in securing future employment, and prisoners' attitudes to employment, warrants more research. It is not enough for prison educators to consider what education can do for the student while in prison but equally what it can do for them following their release.

5.4 Summary of Chapter

This chapter details answers to the primary research questions; who participates in third level education in Irish prisons and what are their motivations for so doing? I suggest there are two types of typical third level prison student. The older, more educationally advantaged student availing of the opportunity to upgrade his qualifications before returning to the workforce; and the younger, educationally disadvantaged student taking third level courses to pass the time constructively while in prison, sometimes with a view to improved employment opportunities on release. However I stressed that these are mere typifications, useful only to increase understanding of the prison context. I suggest that because the former group have much in common with mainstream mature students returning to third level education, they could be labelled 'traditional participants'. I labelled the latter group as 'traditional non-participants' because they display parallels with non-participant typologies as described by other researchers. The chapter contains detailed information outlining the demographic, socio-economic and educational backgrounds of both of these groups. This information is displayed in tabular form and followed by discussion on the

significance of the findings. Comparisons are drawn where possible with other research findings.

The educational biographies of the students surveyed showed that the majority had left school before the age of sixteen, yet their pre-first conviction education level is higher than the general Mountjoy prison population. Almost half of those surveyed held a positive view of their early school experiences, while the other half held a negative attitude. It was discovered that seventeen percent of those who had attended Secondary School had left with no formal qualifications and seventy-three percent had no third level qualifications before coming to prison. It was established that of those that had not undertaken any form of third level study before imprisonment, only seventeen percent had undertaken some other form of adult learning. What is significant about these findings is that of those students who had no third level qualifications before their first conviction, the vast majority would usually be classified as traditional non-participants. Yet the remaining third level prison students can be classified as traditional participants, being typical of those involved in adult learning in the mainstream. This indicates that while in some cases the student profile contrasts sharply with national statistical data in relation to participation in adult learning but in other cases it coincides. The implications of this for prison education are discussed in the next chapter.

Regardless of this disparity, the motivations for study raised by each group are remarkably similar thus proving the prison context is the overriding factor in their decision to pursue third level study. The chapter continued with a summary of the motivational factors as described by the students during the individual semi-structured interviews. These factors range from wanting to improve their employment prospects, to wishing to make their families proud of them, to hoping to impress the judge in the appeal court. It can be seen that while the motivations proffered by the traditional non-participants and participants do vary, the prison context provides the most salient similarities. The most frequently cited commonalities being the opportunity to alleviate boredom and escape from prison life coupled with the development of a sense of personal achievement through doing something worthwhile while imprisoned. One of the most striking

differences between the types of motivations alluded to by each group concerns improving their employment opportunities on release. The traditional participants believed that their academic study would improve their chances while many of the traditional non-participants were not so confident or indeed interested at all in securing employment in the future. The chapter concluded with the cited motivations being grouped into eight interrelated categories, and the frequency with which the prisoners mentioned each motivation during the interviews is indicated and ranked in Appendix 6. Lastly throughout this chapter I have included from the interviews a significant number of direct quotations in order to 'give voice' to the students as discussed earlier.

Chapter 6. CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Introduction

This concluding chapter outlines the relationship between the research findings, the research questions and the research literature. The newly developed relationship is framed within a series of theoretical linkages that combine to indicate the overall implications of the study for policy and practice. The chapter is comprised of three interrelated sections. The first section draws conclusions from the findings and attempts the process of "theorising as thinking through data" (Silverman, 2000, 252). It does so by interweaving the conclusions into some sort of resolution regarding the issues of participation, critical learning, social exclusion and adult education as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. Building on this, the second section recommends further research to follow from this study. It should be noted that because the research was intended as a descriptive and exploratory study rather than a prescriptive or evaluative one, the research recommendations outlined are not considered to be exhaustive. The thesis in concluded in the third section with a series of short comments.

6.2 Conclusions

The traditional non-participants

While recording the caveat that the generalisation and typification of third level prison students cannot do justice to the rich tapestry of the student population or their experiences, I concluded nevertheless that there are two types of 'typical' third level students to emerge from within the findings. One group can be viewed as traditional non-participants. They would not have considered adult learning had they not been imprisoned. This is due mainly to previous negative educational experiences and their socio-economic backgrounds. In some cases their addiction problems and chaotic lifestyles militated against that option. This group is younger than the mean and had little or no complete educational experience pre-first conviction. They proffer similar views on participation as the many Irish adults who see third level education as being for other people.

As seen in the interviews this group discussed similar complexities of socio-cultural realities and dispositional barriers as experienced by traditional non-participants beyond the prison walls and discussed in the earlier Literature Review chapter. Correspondingly it is evident that Quigley's (1997) contention, that non-participants typically belong to a different caste system of norms surrounding formal education, can be applied equally to the prison context. Consequently I would suggest that while the traditional non-participants display evidence of long-standing and enduring negative formative factors that occurred at an early stage in their educational experiences and that would normally militate against their involvement in formal education, ironically it is their time in prison that has provided them with the opportunity to reconsider such views.

From the research we can see that in general they see their third level study as a natural progression of their experiences in prison schools. Having sat some state examinations while in prison, the next logical step was more advanced study. This is possible as practical and financial support systems are in place, they are encouraged to do so by prison educators and fellow students, and most importantly, they have time on their hands and wish to fill that time constructively. Thus having experienced substantial personal benefits from their initial experience of prison education, they developed an interest in pursuing further educational opportunities. In many cases the second chance education afforded by the prison school compensated for earlier negative educational experiences and it should be noted that this group were at pains to stress that their lost confidence as learners was restored by their third level study.

Nonetheless they retained a realistic attitude to the ability of a third level degree to override a criminal record. Perhaps this is due to their innate suspicion that participation in adult learning is not in itself a means to an end and sometimes the rewards are not always what they seem. In other words, their main motivations for participation was to alleviate boredom, to prove something to themselves and others, and because it was the next educational step while in prison, the additional bonus of possibly improving employment opportunities on release was not a significant factor. In this

sense they were motivated primarily by the prison context. Thus it can be seen that it is the dispositional barriers to participation as evident in so much of the literature that is most pertinent to this group. The situational and institutional barriers are simply not relevant in the prison context although they would undoubtedly be a factor should prisoners wish to continue studying on their release.

With so much free time on their hands, a strong support network and a new attitude to learning, it is only natural that this group should try third level education. For many it would seem that the initial enthusiasm and attraction of the early days of their study was carried through by a dogged determination to finish what they started and prove to all that they could do it. Significantly their initial motivation of alleviating boredom began to change as they found that their study became increasingly fulfilling and self-satisfying. Their perception of and attitude to participation in education changed as they acknowledged the personal benefits it had to offer them. It could be argued that in this respect they were experiencing transformative learning, a suggestion to which I will return later in this chapter. Because this group are typical of the general prison population in so many other ways, they can be viewed as positive role models and ambassadors for education within prisons. Their third level study is a powerful and positive aspect of their prison life and it remains to be seen if it can be sustained after their release.

The traditional participants

In contrast and like the majority of mainstream mature students, the other group had already undertaken some form of third level education pre first conviction. In general the group were older than the mean and had positive early educational experiences and secure employment before imprisonment. Consequently I labelled them traditional participants. They were pursuing third level education because they needed to change their careers on release and this seemed the most natural and logical manner in which to do so. Like the other group the alleviation of boredom coupled with the restoration of self-esteem and family support were significant and recurring motivating factors. What particularly surprised me was the high proportion of this

Chapter 6. CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Introduction

This concluding chapter outlines the relationship between the research findings, the research questions and the research literature. The newly developed relationship is framed within a series of theoretical linkages that combine to indicate the overall implications of the study for policy and practice. The chapter is comprised of three interrelated sections. The first section draws conclusions from the findings and attempts the process of "theorising as thinking through data" (Silverman, 2000, 252). It does so by interweaving the conclusions into some sort of resolution regarding the issues of participation, critical learning, social exclusion and adult education as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. Building on this, the second section recommends further research to follow from this study. It should be noted that because the research was intended as a descriptive and exploratory study rather than a prescriptive or evaluative one, the research recommendations outlined are not considered to be exhaustive. The thesis in concluded in the third section with a series of short comments.

6.2 Conclusions

The traditional non-participants

While recording the caveat that the generalisation and typification of third level prison students cannot do justice to the rich tapestry of the student population or their experiences, I concluded nevertheless that there are two types of 'typical' third level students to emerge from within the findings. One group can be viewed as traditional non-participants. They would not have considered adult learning had they not been imprisoned. This is due mainly to previous negative educational experiences and their socio-economic backgrounds. In some cases their addiction problems and chaotic lifestyles militated against that option. This group is younger than the mean and had little or no complete educational experience pre-first conviction. They proffer similar views on participation as the many Irish adults who see third level education as being for other people.

As seen in the interviews this group discussed similar complexities of socio-cultural realities and dispositional barriers as experienced by traditional non-participants beyond the prison walls and discussed in the earlier Literature Review chapter. Correspondingly it is evident that Quigley's (1997) contention, that non-participants typically belong to a different caste system of norms surrounding formal education, can be applied equally to the prison context. Consequently I would suggest that while the traditional non-participants display evidence of long-standing and enduring negative formative factors that occurred at an early stage in their educational experiences and that would normally militate against their involvement in formal education, ironically it is their time in prison that has provided them with the opportunity to reconsider such views.

From the research we can see that in general they see their third level study as a natural progression of their experiences in prison schools. Having sat some state examinations while in prison, the next logical step was more advanced study. This is possible as practical and financial support systems are in place, they are encouraged to do so by prison educators and fellow students, and most importantly, they have time on their hands and wish to fill that time constructively. Thus having experienced substantial personal benefits from their initial experience of prison education, they developed an interest in pursuing further educational opportunities. In many cases the second chance education afforded by the prison school compensated for earlier negative educational experiences and it should be noted that this group were at pains to stress that their lost confidence as learners was restored by their third level study.

Nonetheless they retained a realistic attitude to the ability of a third level degree to override a criminal record. Perhaps this is due to their innate suspicion that participation in adult learning is not in itself a means to an end and sometimes the rewards are not always what they seem. In other words, their main motivations for participation was to alleviate boredom, to prove something to themselves and others, and because it was the next educational step while in prison, the additional bonus of possibly improving employment opportunities on release was not a significant factor. In this

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group among third level prison students as my experience would suggest that their socio-economic and educational backgrounds are not common to the wider prison population. A closer analysis of the findings reveals that it is the category of offence that accounts most probably for this anomaly. The majority of this group are sex offenders. Of all offence categories, it is held generally that it is that of sex offender in which the middle classes are represented most highly. O'Mahony (1997b, 170) maintains "imprisoned sex offenders, when compared with other prisoners, are a far more socially mixed group, containing people from all classes and all walks of life and many who have benefited from considerable social advantage, such as a professional education." He continues, "it is a salutary thought that if all sex offenders who by the present standard deserved imprisonment were actually imprisoned, then the current social class imbalance in the prison population would almost entirely disappear," O'Mahony (1997b, 170).

Similarly it would be important to determine if my research findings would differ if sex offenders as a group were removed. It would then be necessary to determine if the profiles of the remaining prison students are more in line with the general prison population as the findings of the pilot study conducted in Mountjoy suggests. If this proved so, and I speculate that this is indeed the case, then the major implication for prison education lies in the possibility that the 'typical' prisoner is just as under-represented in third level prison education as he and his contemporaries are in mainstream provision. Conversely the bulk of third level prison students, just like the majority of mainstream mature students, can be viewed as traditional participants. This would suggest that the prison pattern of participation emulates the mainstream pattern in its under-representation of traditional non-participants.

This is worrying on a number of levels. Firstly it would seem that prison education is not increasing participation in third level education among the traditionally excluded. Secondly because prison education seemingly has a larger pool of the traditionally excluded from which to draw, and because it is only drawing a minority from this pool, it could be seen to be drawing proportionally less than many other mainstream agencies. If this was proved to be the case it could be accused of failing to meet one of its

primarily aims "to establish the appetite and capacity for lifelong learning" (Strategy Statement of the Prison Education Service 2003-2007, 2003, 1). But it must be noted that this is conjecture as there is no evidence in this study that non-participants are over-represented in the prison population, merely that they are under-represented in third level prison education. Yet I am speculating that if the findings of the pilot study were to be applied to the wider prison population then this would prove to be the case. As suggested later, more research is needed to confirm this.

Participation

So what can we learn from this? What can we learn from those that choose to participate simply because they are imprisoned? What can we learn from those that continue to self-exclude? Most importantly, how do we assure ourselves that any lessons we may learn are not the result of a research hegemony that obscures the unique explanations behind the students' engagement or exclusion? I mean by this that we should beware of asking the wrong questions. Rather than asking why are they self-excluding, we should be asking what can we learn from their self-exclusion and how is their self-exclusion impacting on their prison life? After all prison educators must accept that the decisions to self-exclude by similar non-participating prisoners are well-considered, ethically responsible decisions situated in the realities of their past experiences and present lives. Quite simply for many prisoners there are perceived benefits to self-exclusion.

In a similar vein we have much to learn from those traditional non-participants that do engage in third level study while in custody. Their involvement proves incorrect the common misconception and stereotyping of non-participants as unmotivated, unwilling and unable. As any prison educator will testify, prisoners are more than capable of learning and engaging in advanced educational activities. If we couple that fact with the evidence from this thesis, we no longer need to ask of the prison population, who participates and why? Instead we need to move away from questioning non-participation in formal education and towards questioning engagement in informal learning. Rather than ask why so few of the formally undereducated prisoners choose to avoid formal prison education programs,

we might well ask why and how so many continue to learn, function, even to thrive in our prisons without our help or interference. Whether we agree that they are in fact thriving or whether we agree that there are benefits to self-exclusion, we need to ask how do we foster and validate informal learning within the prison context? In short we need to know how to respond to those that self-exclude from formal prison education?

Perhaps the answers to these questions lie in the research findings. Because we know now that the usual situational and institutional barriers are not readily applicable to the prison context, it remains that negative dispositional barriers are the likely cause of under-representation. What the study does indicate is that while the length of sentence, the age of the prisoner and the category of offence are the overriding features of prison patterns of participation in third level education, it is fundamental dispositional barriers that account for under-representation by traditional non-participants. This is important information because it suggests why the non-participants are self-excluding. Like so many other non-participants, they continue to self-exclude primarily due to their early negative educational experiences coupled with deeply instilled values ascribed by the individual to learning and its expected outcomes. Armed with this knowledge, prison education is now in a position to devise strategies to increase participation among those traditional non-participants under-represented in third level prison courses.

Critical Education

Having read earlier chapters, it must be obvious to the reader that I am firmly committed to the ideals of critical education as the cornerstone of prison education. I see critical pedagogy as enabling "teachers and others view education as a political, social and cultural enterprise. That is, as a form of engaged practice, critical pedagogy calls into question forms of subordination that create inequalities among different groups as they live out their lives" (Aronowitz and Giroux, 1991, 118). I buy into the view advocated by Germanotta (1995, 106) that once "critical reflection begins, in the context of formal education being pursued in a prison setting, the prisoner-students find their own life histories placed in a new perspective,

and they begin to see the possibilities of genuine personal transformation and eventually transformation of the world." Throughout the thesis I called for a re-conceptualisation of prison education along critical learning lines in order to fulfil Duguid's (2000, ix) prophecy that "through education programs prisons can provide for a more natural, organic, or authentic process of self-transformation through empowerment, communication of values, and the formation of new interests." This is important because I suggest that non-participating prisoners, even those engaging in informal learning, may be missing the opportunity for personal transformation and critical reflection.

Having said that, there is little evidence that those that do engage in formal prison education are in fact experiencing critical reflection and personal transformation. But I would suggest further that this is not because it is not occurring, rather because it is unrecognised and certainly unacknowledged. To support my view that it does occur, we can return to the research findings and the comments of the traditional non-participant in particular. Earlier I had suggested that the traditional non-participants' revised opinions of third level education following their direct involvement in it, could be seen as an indication of the occurrence of transformative learning. Initially the traditional non-participants believed higher education had little value and was of no relevance to them, but as they advanced with their studies they came to believe that it could make a practical and pleasurable difference to their lives while in prison and maybe even a material difference on their release. It would seem to me that this change of opinion is a distinct example of personal transformation. It can be applied to Mezirow's own definition of perspective transformation as "the empowering process of becoming critically aware of how and why the structure of psycho-structural assumptions has come to constrain the way we see our relationships, reconstituting this structure to permit a more inclusive and discriminating integration of experience and acting upon these new understandings" Mezirow (1981, 6). But how these transformations come about is of prime importance to my argument.

I would propose that prison students frequently experience such 'epiphanies' but they are rarely recognised as such. It is as if they are

incidental or superficial. The learner is rarely afforded the opportunity to develop a conscious recognition of the difference between their old perceptions and their new ones, or encouraged to appropriate the newer perspective when it is of more value. Because perspective transformation is a precondition or prerequisite for meaningful changes in perception and behaviour, and because it often goes unrecognised, efforts to facilitate lasting personal development are thwarted and nullified. This is where critical education comes into its own. Unlike theories of education based on human capital thinking or humanist thinking, critical education inherently incorporates approaches to learning that allow prisoners the possibility of self-transformation. This is why I believe prison educators need to analyse, synthesise and critique the ways in which transformative learning can be applied to their practice. We must look at ways in which research, teaching and practice are interwoven so that we can apply the theory of transformative learning to the practice of prison education.

Perhaps one such way is to advance constant reflexivity as the central dynamic for learning in the prison context. While all the conditions for this presently exist, such as learning taking place in group settings that allow students discuss their experiences and commonalities; the next step in the process is often ignored. The recognition that they may have experienced significant perspective changes is seldom remarked on or discussed. The prisoner is rarely encouraged to analyse and act on the significance of any such events or changes. Without active facilitation to allow the student analysis such occurrences and their implications, prison teachers are in danger of bringing their charges to the well but not allowing them drink. The students must be encouraged to examine the experiences that framed their old assumptions and questioned as to whether they wish to hold onto these epistemic and socio-cultural assumptions or incorporate new ones.

A means to achieve this is to have students keep a record of such events and write their educational biographies. According to Dominice (1990, 95), "the educational biography seems to be a original way to reflect critically about the knowledge, values, and the meanings constructed by adults through their life experiences." It would seem to me that such biographies could ensure that prison students no longer experiences significant altering transformative

events that they keep to themselves because they are not encouraged to examine and discuss them or their implications. If we agree that any major challenge to an established perspective can result in a transformation and that most significant behaviour changes are functions of perspective transformation, then prison teachers and students must recognise, appreciate and discuss such occurrences. In short prison teachers need to be knowledgeable of the factors that foster perspective transformation, they must facilitate critical reflection, and they must incorporate both into their teaching. The re-conceptualisation of prison education along lines of critical education will not only allow for this but would actively support it.

Social exclusion

Of course any such moves are futile unless we are clear as to their ultimate purpose. Having decried the current rhetoric of lifelong learning earlier in this thesis, it would be foolish of me not to explore how the research findings support and justify that derision. We have seen that the motivations of the traditional non-participants are socio-culturally specific and that most of them would not have participated unless imprisoned. If we agree with Ecclestone and Filed (2001, 4) that "social capital is integral to enhancing positive social and cultural dimensions to motivations in learning programmes", then we must agree also that education that seeks to operationalise social capital over human capital is the most appropriate for the majority of Irish prisoners. As suggested earlier the emphasis on human capital in lifelong learning discourse individualises the problem of social exclusion and removes responsibility from the state, this emphasis is remarkably like the current emphasis in penal discourse on addressing offending behaviour programmes. This is hardly surprising because after all prison policy is inherently political and the same political agenda is driving both educational and penal policy. Because these issues have been politicised, prison educators should not be afraid of responding in a political manner. Davidson (1995, 12) calls on prison educationists "to construct political strategies for participating in social structures designed to fight for prisons and prison school as democratic public spheres."

Such thinking forces us to ask ourselves what do we want from prison education? I would suggest that the answer is threefold; prisoner transformation, a means to negotiate identities and a way to acquire cultural capital so that they can achieve status legitimately. But to achieve the above we must be cautious that the process does not involve cultural suffocation through assimilation into dominant value systems and the reconstruction of identities within the dominant discourse. This is why the raising of the prisoners' social and cultural capital must be to the vanguard of prison education policy. The emphasis on social capital draws attention to resources already in place. It is an alternative to the more conventional 'deficit model' of education based on human capital and it complements attempts by prison teachers to provide alternatives to offending behaviour programmes. The human capital approach like the offending behaviour approach refers to the properties of individuals while social capital refers to connections among individuals, social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them. In that sense social capital is closely related to what Putnam (2000, 19) calls "civic virtue", a concept that would satisfy even the most ardent advocate of rehabilitation through imprisonment. Yet prison education must be realistic, it has its limitations and must not be seen as a panacea for rehabilitation. No-one is in prison simply because they have a poor educational record, usually this is but one of a myriad of factors that work together to bring about their criminalisation. That myriad of factors being the root cause of social exclusion. If prison education can trigger students to analyse and critically reflect on such factors in a supportive and enabling manner, then it sets the conditions necessary for perspective transformation and ultimately behavioural change. Can we realistically ask any more of it?

6.3 Further Research

During the course of this study many possibilities for further research became obvious some of which have been alluded to already. Here I concentrate on four areas that I feel warrant further investigation. These include research into motivation for engagement in all prison activities, the

identification of patterns of participation among different categories of prisoners, the tracking of third level prison students on their release, and research into the extent and significance of informal learning among the prison population. Each suggestion is elaborated on more fully in subsequent paragraphs.

The findings of this research suggest that whatever the initial motivating factors for student participation in third level education, the participants soon come to view their academic study as being of the utmost benefit "in getting them through their sentence" and preparing them for life afterwards. They recognise the importance of taking responsibility for their sentence planning and doing "something constructive" while in custody. Thus they come to appreciate the relationship between adult learning activities and deeply rooted cogitative transformation. This is a salutary lesson that policy makers reviewing regime activities can learn from prisoners. While this research examined only a small aspect of the daily activities of a small number of prisoners it proved telling. It indicates how some prisoners cope with long sentences and make good use of their time spent behind bars. It identified how prisoners use education to take control of their lives and help shape their destinies. This research could be built on and developed in order to produce a broader picture for all regime activities. By focusing on all prison activities and conducting a similar research process, a pattern of participation in daily activities could be established for every prisoner in each prison. This does not exist at present and only general statistical sketches are available. We need to learn more about prisoner motivation for involvement in daily activities. Without this understanding those activities may appear to be aimless and meaningless. The conclusions and recommendations of any such research would aid management and staff in their development of appropriate and realistic responses to the needs of the prison population. Thus I recommend that this thesis be seen as a foundation for a more detailed and all embracing study into programmes and regime activities.

The research concluded that category of offence played a considerable role in the profile of participating students. The high proportion of sex offenders undertaking third level study has implications for future research. The

increasing population of sex offenders are an exception that confirms the rule that a homogeneous grouping largely populates Irish prisons. This has significant implications for future research. A weakness of this study was its attempt to view the prison population as a whole rather than establish a pattern for each category of offence before bringing that data together to develop a composite pattern. Future research could rectify this shortcoming and would prove more informative if it drew a specific profile for each category, this for example might indicate more clearly the exact percentage of traditional and non-traditional participants engaged in third level prison study.

The findings suggest that if future research were to be conducted on each category of offence, the typical third level student would differ in a number of important ways within categories. As we have seen the sex offender is likely to be older, have fewer previous convictions, come from a greater diversity of socio-economic backgrounds and be well qualified, each of which bears considerable significance on patterns of participation. Their comparison with political prisoners might generate yet another pattern of results, as those imprisoned for politically motivated offences are likely to have experienced the operation of the criminal justice system in a radically different way than other prisoners and perhaps have significantly different motivations for participation. As evident from the pilot study, the third level student in Mountjoy prison, while different from either the sex offender or political prisoners, is highly comparable to his fellow detainees as profiled by O'Mahony (1997a, 1993). I suggest that future research should attempt to identify category-specific patterns of participation, perhaps through stratified random sampling, in order to evaluate more closely the varying offender characterisations. By selecting samples proportionally from each offence category a specific picture rather than a general view would emerge.

Another research study I would recommend is to track third level students on their release. It would be useful to determine if the traditional participants succeeded in using their updated qualification to secure employment or avail of further education. It would be advantageous to determine if those who wished to continue were able to avail of mainstream

learning opportunities and provisions or if paths to their progression were blocked. Likewise any examination of the post-release experiences of those students who appear to be motivated primarily by the prison context would determine if when removed from that context they continue with their studies. If these students are continuing with third level study on their release, it could indicate whether they learn now for self-development, to increase their employment potential or some other factor. The answers would indicate the strength of the influence of the prison context. In general, any tracking study would also indicate just how realistic the students' pre-release educational and employment expectations proved to be. In any such study I would like to see two particular questions raised. Firstly is the possible increase in human capital afforded by higher education offset by having a criminal record? Secondly does gaining a degree while in prison lead to discernable improvements in financial, social and familial networks on release?

Other significant issues that can be addressed by future research concerns the area of formal and informal learning among the prison population. We have seen that how we identify learning is of the utmost relevance for any examination of motivation. "Without any robust or explicit definition of 'learning', the idea of 'non-learners' or 'non-participants' takes on a judgemental tone of its own" (Ecclestone and Field, 2001, 6). The issue is acting responsibly to assist adults in their formal and informal learning where appropriate. It would be telling to investigate if prisoners are engaging in non-formal or informal learning to any significant level while in custody. If it were discovered that this was so, it would be necessary to determine if this complements or competes with present formal provision. It would be useful to investigate the impact of informal learning on life after imprisonment. For any future research into participation in prison education to be truly innovative, informal and non-formal learning among the prison population and its progressive potential for transformative learning must be a prime focus. Perhaps the next step should be to research the promising area of how and why non-participating prisoners engage in informal and incidental learning?

Finally one of the most significant methodological aspects of this research is its collaborative element as discussed in detail in Chapter 4. I believe this to be one its strengths. I would recommend that whatever the research topic is, future prison researchers consider strongly embarking on collaborative research. This could silence my earlier criticism that the bulk of prison research is missing one essential element that of the voice of the prisoner.

6.4 Final comments

This research presents findings, reflections and conclusions arising from an examination of the experiences and perspectives of third level prison students. It suggests that patterns of participation in adult learning are largely meaningless unless accompanied by a shared understanding of what motivates the learners to participate or self-exclude. It locates third level Irish prison education within the wider issue of participation and non-participation in adult learning and its role in reducing social exclusion. While the thesis will not settle any arguments on such issues, it may contribute to the debate by illuminating what has until now been the secluded and untapped world of the experiences, needs and aspirations of prison students.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1(a) Informed Consent Form.

Third Level Education In Irish Prisons: Who Participates And Why?

Anne Costelloe has explained to me what this research is about. I have had the chance to ask questions about the research. I know that my participation is voluntary. I know I can stop the interview at any time, for example, for a break. I know I can withdraw my consent at any time during the interview and any material on audiotape will be destroyed. I know that at a later date I can withdraw my consent for the material to be used.

I know that this interview is confidential unless there is reason to believe that either I or someone else may be in danger.[1]

I know that if I sign this I consent to participate in the research. I know I can contact Anne if at a later date if I have any queries/concerns about the research or what I said.

Signed_____ Date _____

Name in block letters

_____

I, Anne Costelloe, agree to abide by the terms of this consent form.

Signed_____ Date _____

[1] In line with Exception to Confidentiality set down by the Research Ethics Committee of the IPS.

Appendix 1(b)

The following key points informed the design of the consent form in order to respect the civil, social and human rights of the interviewees.

- Clear and adequate information explaining the research was given to the respondents.
- The interviewees were assured that personal confidentiality would be maintained at all stages of the research process. On transcription the interview was anonymised, as were the questionnaire findings, any names, geographical locators or other identifiable materials were removed from the final report.
- Informed consent was sought and clearly obtained from all those who participated in the research study. The participants could withdraw their consent at any stage of the research process.
- It was made clear that participation was voluntary, that consent could be withdrawn at any time, that participation would have no negative or positive impact on their sentence and that refusal to participate would have no negative implications for them.
- The participants were assured that any information obtained in this research was purely for academic purposes and all participants have the right to obtain information about its findings after its completion.

Appendix 2. Irish Prison Service Exceptions to Confidentiality Document.

The Research Ethics Committee of the Irish Prison Service recommends that, because of the complexity of ethical issues that can be encountered, researchers should consult their supervisors or colleagues about ethical issues.

Supervisees: Consult with supervisor and/or appropriate groups and committees if faced with a difficult situation or apparent conflict. Seek consensus on the most ethical course of action and the most responsible, knowledgeable and effective, and respectful way to carry it out.

Supervisor: Assume overall ethical responsibility for the scientific and professional activities of those (students, trainees, assistants, supervisees) whose research work they supervise. The responsibility includes monitoring of subordinates' activity, and making them aware of the ethical principles involved.

1. **Whenever possible information should only be shared with the agreement of the offender. The consent must be fully informed consent and must be given voluntarily.**
11. Where the offender lacks the capacity to consent to information being shared any sharing should be on the following basis:
1. The level of need and dependency
2. The nature and degree of assessed risk
3. The relevance of the information to ensuring that the prisoner receives the appropriate level of care, treatment and support.

The following exceptions to the duty of confidentiality are considered important in the prison context. First, the welfare of the offender warrants disclosure. Second, the welfare of another person warrants disclosure. Third, the welfare of society in genial is at stake. And fourth, the researcher is obliged to disclose information on foot of a court order or under legislation, for example, the Protection for Persons reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998.

111. Where offender has capacity but disagrees, information sharing will take place only on the following basis:

1. **There is serious risk of harm to the offender.** Only the most compelling circumstances could justify a researcher acting contrary to the offender's perceived interest in the absence of consent. It remains the researcher's duty to make every responsible effort to persuade the offender to allow the information to be given. It is ethical to break confidentiality without a prisoner's consent when it is in his/her own interests to do so, for example in the case of suicide intent. In such a case the governor and medical personnel should be informed.
2.

2. **There is serious risk of harm to others:** The researcher may be confronted with allegations of child abuse by an offender. The researcher must have formed an opinion that a child is or has been assaulted, ill treated, neglected or sexually abused, or that the child's health, development or welfare is or has been avoidably impaired or neglected. A clinical decision regarding such allegations should be made in consultation with responsible authorities.

3. **And if disclosure is necessary to prevent or detect serious crimes against the person and the need to disclose is so serious as to warrant a breach of personal confidentiality.** This dilemma may be posed by the possibility of violent crime. The researcher who decides to communicate should discriminate and ensure that the recipient is a responsible appropriate authority. In the prison setting this implies a designated responsible authority, for example, governor, psychologist, or psychiatrist. The risk of harm must be proved to be real before information can be disclosed, the threat must be serious and the potential victim must be readily identifiable. Where significant risk to others is indicated, information relevant to managing such risk will be shared on a 'need to know' basis.

4. **The offender should be informed of this decision to disclose unless this places the researcher at risk.**

Appendix 3. Postal questionnaire.

General information

1. Sex? (please circle) M F

2. Age? (what age were you on the 1st of February 2002) _____

3. Place of birth? _____

4. If you grew up in Dublin, please state the main postal district of upbringing until age 15 _____

5. Occupation of father? _____

6. Was he usually employed? _____

7. Occupation of mother? _____

8. Was she usually employed? _____

General educational background

9. What age were you when you left secondary level education? _____

10. Please name the last secondary level school you attended pre-first conviction. _____

11. If different, please name the Secondary School you attended for most of you secondary level education _____

11(a) If you changed schools, please state reasons for doing so. _____

_____

_____

12. In general what was your experience of schooling pre-first conviction? (Please continue on another page if necessary.

_____

_____

_____

13. Which of the following state examinations had you sat pre-first conviction? (please circle)

Inter/Junior Certificate
Leaving Certificate
Applied Leaving Certificate
Other (please state)

14. Which of the following state examinations have you sat since coming to prison?

Inter/Junior Certificate
Leaving Certificate
Other (please state)

15.Please state any academic qualifications you had attained pre-first conviction.

_____

_____

16(a). Had you undertaken any form of third level education* pre-first conviction? (**Degree or diploma courses awarded by a recognised higher education institution or university*) Yes No

16(b).If yes, please give the following details;

Name of course

_____

Level of course (i.e., certificate, diploma, degree)

_____

Institution

_____

How much of course did you complete?

_____

17(a). Had you undertaken any form of adult/second chance education pre-first conviction? Yes No

17(b). If yes, please give the following details;

Name of course

_____

Level of course (i.e., certificate, diploma, degree)

_____

Institution

_____

How much of the course did you complete?

_____

18 What qualifications were you aiming for in either 16(a), 16(b), 17(a) & 17(b)?

_____

19. If questions 16 to 18 do not apply to you, please state why? _____

_____

_____

_____

20. If you did not complete any of the courses listed in 16(a), 16(b), 17(a) & 17(b), please outline reasons why? (Please continue on an extra page if necessary)

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

21. If you had the opportunity of attending higher education pre-conviction, would you have done so?

_____

_____

Present field of study

22. What third level course are you studying?
Name of course

_____

Institution

_____

23. In what year of study are you presently engaged?
(i.e., 1st year, 3rd year,)

_____

24. Are you undertaking any other third level course?
(if yes, please give details)

_____

25. Could you outline any barriers to course completion you may have experienced to date, or any you could envisage experiencing in the future? (Please continue on extra page if necessary)

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

26. If you are one of those randomly selected, do you agree to be interviewed? (This interview will last for approximately 1 hour)

Yes No

27. Are there any comments you wish to make on any of the issues raised above, or extra information you wish to add?

Appendix 4. Covering letter.

Education Centre,
Mountjoy Prison,
North Circular Road
Dublin 7.

Dear

I am a teacher in the school in Mountjoy Prison and like you am studying with the Open University. I am doing a Doctorate in Education and am researching participation by Irish prison students in third level education. By third level I am referring to either degree or diploma courses awarded by a recognised higher education institution or university. The actual title of my research proposal is Third Level Education in Irish Prisons: Who participates and Why? As the title suggests I am hoping to identify the motivations and experiences that led you to study at third level while in custody.

I am hoping to meet and interview at least half of all students who are taking third level courses. Before that I would like to build a general profile of all third level students. This is why I am asking you to complete and return the enclosed questionnaire. Following that, if you are agreeable, and are one of the students randomly selected for interview I will arrange to meet with you as soon as possible.

I hope you will take part in this research but if you wish not to be involved please inform your Supervising Teacher or Open University Liaison Teacher at this stage. I want to assure you that student identities will be concealed in the published piece and confidentiality will be maintained at all times. If you would like to take part please complete the enclosed questionnaire and return it to me. If you have any questions regarding this letter or the research please contact your Open University Liaison teacher or me at the above address.

Thank you for your help,
Best wishes,

Appendix 5. Interview questions and question order.

1. How long have you been studying at third level?
2. What course are you studying this year?
3. How is it going?
4. Are you glad you started?
5. Could you summarise your motivations for doing third level study while in prison?
6. Did you do any third level study before coming to prison?
7. Why you are studying this particular course?
8. Are you working towards any qualifications?
9. Do you intend to continue with your studies on your release?
10. Do you think your study will stand to you on your release?
11. At the moment, how important are your studies to you?
12. What do you see as the benefits of following a third level course while serving a prison sentence?
13. Is there anything, other than the qualifications, to be gained from study at third level while in prison?
14. Do you think you would have undertaken any third level study if you had never come to prison?
15. Do you think there's a particular type of prisoners that undertakes third level study or would everyone do it if they could?
16. Do you think they might differ from those of third level students on the outside?
17. Is there anything else you want to tell me or think I should know?

Appendix 6 Motivational categories and frequency of distribution

Category of motivation	*Frequency*	*Percentage*
1. Alleviate boredom	34	87%
2. Self-development	34	87%
3. Sense of achievement	33	84%
4. Get a job on release	33	84%
5. Use time in prison constructively	33	84%
6. Make family proud	21	54%
7. Pursue old interests/develop new ones	8	20%
8.Help his case when back in court	6	15%

Appendix 7 Occupational codes

Socio-economic group and occupation Employment Status*

Employers and Managers
Senior managers in national Government 1 3,4
General Managers 1 3,4
Local Government Officers 3,4
General Administrators in national Government 1 3,4
Production and works managers 1 3,4
Building Managers 1 3,4
Company financial managers 1 3,4
Marketing Managers 1 3,4
Purchasing managers 1 3,4
Personnel Managers 1 3,4
Computer Systems Managers 1 3,4
Credit Controllers 1 3,4
Bank and building society managers 1 3,4
Other financial managers n.e.s 1 3,4
Transport managers 1 3,4
Stores and warehousing managers 1 3,4
Commissioned officers in armed forces 3,4
Senior police and prison officers 3,4
Garage managers and proprietors 1 3,4
Hotel and accommodation managers 1 3,4
Restaurant and catering managers 1 3,4
Publicans, innkeepers and club managers 1 3,4
Entertainment and sports managers 1 3,4
Travel agency managers 1 3,4
Managers and proprietors of butchers 1 3,4
Managers and proprietors of shops 1 3,4
Administrators of schools and colleges 1 2 3,4
Other managers n.e.s 1 3,4
Judges 1 3,4
Librarians, archivists and curators 3,4
Draughts persons 1
Aircraft Officers, traffic planners and controllers 1
Ship and hovercraft officers 1 3,4
Underwriters, claims assessors, brokers and investment analysts 1
Matrons, house parents, welfare, community and youth workers 1
Authors, writers and journalists 1
Artists, commercial/industrial artists, graphic and clothing designers 1
Actors, musicians, entertainers, stage managers, producers and directors 1
Photographers, camera, sound and video equipment Operators 1
Professional athletes and sport officials 1
Vocational, industrial trainers and driving instructors 1
Accounts and wages clerks, bookkeepers and other financial clerks 1
Cashiers, bank and counter clerks 1
Debt, rent and other cash collectors 1
Filing, computer, library and other clerks n.e.s 1
Stores, storekeepers, warehousemen/women, dispatch and production control clerks 1
Secretaries, medical, legal, personal assistants, typists and word processor operators 1
Computer operators, data processing operators and other
Office machine operators 1.
Bricklayers and masons 1
Roofers, slayers, tillers, sheeters and cladders 1
Plasterers 1
Glaziers 1
Builders and building contractors 1
Floorers, floor coverers, carpet fitters and planners, floor and wall tilers 1
Painters and decorators 1
Scaffolders, riggers, steeplejacks and other
Construction trades n.e.s 1
Toolmakers 1
Metal working production and maintenance fitters 1
Precision instrument makers, goldsmiths, silversmiths and precious stone workers 1

Other machine tool setters and CNC setter-operators n.e.s 1
Electricians and electrical maintenance fitters 1
Telephone fitters 1
Cable Jointers and lines repairers 1
Radio, TV and video engineers 1
Computer engineers (installation and maintenance) 1
Other electrical and electronic trades 1
Smiths, forge/ metal plate workers and shipwrights 1
Plumbers, heating and ventilating engineers and related trades 1
Sheet metal workers 1
Welders and steel erectors 1
Motor mechanics, auto electricians, tyre and exhaust fitters 1
Vehicle body repairers, panel beaters and spray painters 1
Weavers, knitters, warp preparers, bleachers, dyers and finishers 1
Sewing machinists, menders, darners and embroiderers 1
Coach trimmers, upholsterers and mattress makers 1
Shoe repairers and other leather makers 1
Tailors, dressmakers, clothing cutters, milliners and furriers 1
Other textiles, garments and related trades n.e.s 1
Printers, originators and compositors 1
Bookbinders, print finishers and othr printing trades n.e.s 1
Carpenters and joiners 1
Cabinetmakers 1
Other woodworking trades n.e.s 1
Bakers and flour confectioners 1
Butchers and meat cutters 1
Fishmongers and poultry dressers 1
Glass product and ceramics makers, finishers and other operatives 1
Gardeners and groundsmen/groundswomen 1
Horticulture trades 1
Other craft and related occupations 1
Chefs and cooks 1
Child minders, nursery nurses and playgroup leaders 1
Educational assistants 1
Hairdressers, barbers and beauticians 1
Launderers, dry cleaners and pressers 1
Undertakers, bookmakers, and other personal service workers n.e.s 1
Importers, Exporters, commodity and shipping brokers 1
Technical and wholesale sales representatives 1
Auctioneers, estimators, valuers and other sales representatives n.e.s 1
Roundsmen/roundswomen and van salespersons 1
Market/ street traders and scrap dealers 1
Merchandisers, window dressers, floral arrangers and telephone salespersons 1
Moulders and furnace operatives (metal) 1
Electroplaters, galvanisers and colour coaters 1
Other metal making and treating process operatives n.e.s 1
Inspectors, viewers, and laboratory testers 1
Drivers of road goods vehicles 1
Bus conductors and coach drivers 1
Taxi/cab drivers, chauffeurs and couriers 1
Seafarers (merchant navy), barge and boat operatives 1
Mechanical plant drivers/operatives and crane drivers 1
Fork truck drivers 1
Other transport and machinery operatives n.e.s 1
Pipe layers/pipe jointers and related construction workers 1
Woodworking machine operatives 1
Mine (excluding coal) and quarry workers 1
Other plant, machine and process operatives n.e.s 1
Fishing and related workers 1
Road construction, paviors and kerb layers 1
Other building and civil engineering labourers 1
Stevedores and dockers 1
Cleaners and domestics 1
Other occupations in sales and services n.e.s 1

All other labourers and related workers 1

Higher Professional

Chemists 1 2 3,4
Biological scientists 1 2 3,4
Physicists 1 2 3,4
Other natural scientists n.e.s 1 2 3,4
Civil and mining engineers 1 2 3,4
Mechanical Engineers 1 2 3,4
Electrical and electronic engineers 1 2 3,4
Software engineers 1 2 3,4
Chemical, production, planning and quality control engineers 1 2 3,4
Design and development engineers 1 2 3,4
Other engineers and technologists n.e.s 1 2 3,4
Medical practitioners 1 2 3,4
Pharmacists, pharmacologists, ophthalmic and dispensing Opticians 1 2 3,4
Dental practitioners 1 2 3,4
Veterinarians 1 2 3,4
University, IT and higher education teachers 1 2 3,4
Barristers and solicitors 1 2 3,4
Chartered and certified management accountants (including taxation experts) 1 2 3,4
Actuaries, economists, statisticians, management consultants and business analysts 1 2 3,4
Architects, town planners and surveyors 1 2 3,4
Psychologists and other social/behavioral scientists 1 2 3,4
Clergy 1 2 3,4
Social Workers and probation officers 1 2 3,4

Lower professional

Marketing Managers 2
Civil Service executive officers 3,4
Secondary and vocational education teachers 1 2 3,4
Primary and nursery education teachers 1 2 3,4
Other teaching professionals n.e.s 1 2 3,4
Laboratory technicians 1 2 3,4
Engineering technicians 1 2 3,4
Electrical and electronic technicians 1 2 3,4
Architectural, town planning, building and
Civil engineering technicians 1 2 3,4
Other scientific technicians n.e.s 1 2 3,4
Building inspectors and quantity surveyors 1 2 3,4
Marine, insurance and other surveyors 1 2 3,4
Computer analyst programmers 1 2 3,4
Aircraft officers, traffic planners and controllers 3,4
Nurses and midwives 1 2 3,4
Medical radiographers 1 2 3,4
Physiotherapists and chiropodists 1 2 3,4
Medical technicians, dental auxiliaries and dental nurses 1 2 3,4
Occupational and speech therapists, psychotherapists and other therapists n.e.s 1 2 3,4
Other health associate professionals n.e.s 1 2 3,4
Legal service and related occupations 1 2 3,4
Underwriters, claims assessors, brokers and investment analysts 1 2 3,4
Personnel, industrial relations and work study officers 1 2 3,4
Authors, writers and journalists 2 3,4
Artists, commercial/industrial artists, graphic and clothing designers 2 3,4
Actors, musicians, entertainers, stage managers, producers and directors. 2 3,4
Information officers, careers advisers and vocational guidance specialists 1 2 3,4
Vocational, industrial trainers and driving instructors 3,4
Inspectors of factories, trading standards and other statutory inspectors 1 2 3,4
Environmental health, occupational hygienists and safety officers 1 2 3,4
Other associate professional and technical occupations n.e.s 1 2 3,4
Buyers and purchasing officers 1 2 3,4

Non manual

Draughts persons 3,4
Matrons, house parents, welfare, community and youth workers 3,4
Nurses' aids 3,4
Photographers, camera, sound and video equipment operators 3,4

Professional athletes and sport officials 3,4
Civil service clerical officers and assistants 3,4
Local Government clerical officers and assistants 3,4
Accounts and wages clerks, book-keepers and other financial clerks 3,4
Cashiers, bank and counter clerks 3,4
Debt, rent and other cash collectors 3,4
Filing, computer, library and other clerks n.e.s 3,4
Secretaries, medical, legal, personal assistants, typists and word processor operators 3,4
Receptionists and receptionist- telephonists 1 2 3,4
Telephone operators, telegraph operators and other office communication system operators 1 2 3,4
Computer operators, data processing operators and other office machine operators 3,4
Soldiers (sergeant and below) 3,4
Police officers (sergeant and below) 3,4
Fire service officers 3,4
Prison service officers 3,4
Chefs and cooks 3,4
Waiters and waitresses 3,4
Bar staff 3,4
Travel and flight attendants 3,4
Child minders, nursery nurses and playgroup leaders 3,4
Educational assistants 3,4
Hairdressers, barbers and beauticians 3,4
Housekeepers (domestic and non-domestic) 1 2 3,4
Importers, exporters, commodity and shipping 3,4
Brokers
Technical and wholesale sales representatives 3,4
Auctioneers, estimators, valuers and other sales representatives n.e.s 3,4
Sales assistants, check out operators and petrol pump attendants 3,4
Market/ street traders and scrap dealers 3,4
Merchandisers, window dressers, floral arrangers and telephone sales persons 3,4
Railway station workers, supervisors and guards 3,4
Counterhands and catering assistants 3,4

Manual skilled

Bricklayers and masons 3,4
Plasterers 3,4
Builders and building contractors 3,4
Floorers, floor coverers, carpet fitters and planners, floor and wall tilers 3,4
Painters and decorators 3,4
Toolmakers 3,4
Metal working production and maintenance fitters 3,4
Telephone fitters 3,4
Cable jointers and lines repairers 3,4
Radio, TV and video engineers 3,4
Computer engineers (installation and maintenance) 3,4
Other electrical and electronic trades n.e.s 3,4
Smiths, forge/metal plate workers and shipwrights 3,4
Plumbers, heating and ventilating engineers and related trades 3,4
Sheet metal workers 3,4
Welders and steel erectors 3,4
Motor mechanics, auto electricians, tyre and exhaust fitters 3,4
Vehicle body repairs, panel beaters and spray painters 3,4
Weavers, knitters, warp preparers, bleachers, dyers and finishers 3,4
Coach trimmers, upholsterers, and mattress makers 3,4
Shoe repairers and other leather makers 3,4
Tailors, dressmakers, clothing cutters, milliners and furriers 3,4
Other textiles, garments and related trades n.e.s 3,4
Printers, originators and compositors 3,4
Bookbinders, print finishers and other printing trades 3,4
Carpenters and joiners 3,4
Cabinetmakers 3,4
Other woodworking trades n.e.s 3,4
Bakers and flour confectioners 3,4
Butchers and meat confectioners 3,4

Fishmongers and poultry dressers 3,4
Glass product and ceramics makers, finishers and other operatives 3,4
Roundsmen/women and van salespersons 3,4
Bakery and confectionery process operatives 3,4
Tannery production operatives 3,4
Paper, wood and related process plant operatives 3,4
Rubber process operatives, moulding machine operatives and tyre builders 3,4
Moulders and furnace operatives (metal) 3,4
Electroplaters, galvanisers and colour coaters 3,4
Other metal making and treating process operatives n.e.s 3,4
Bus and road transport depot inspectors 1 2 3,4
Drivers of road goods vehicles 3,4
Bus conductors and coach drivers 3,4
Taxi/cab drivers, chauffeurs and couriers 3,4
Railway station workers, supervisors and guards 3,4
Rail engine drivers and other railway line operatives 3,4
Mechanical plant drivers/operatives and crane drivers 3,4
Fork truck drivers 3,4
Other transport and machinery operatives n.e.s 3,4
Woodworking machine operatives 3,4

Semi skilled

Stores, storekeepers, warehousemen/women,
Dispatch and production control clerks 3,4
Roofers, slaters, tilers, sheeters and cladders 3,4
Glaziers 3,4
Scaffolders, riggers, steeplejacks and other construction trades n.e.s 3,4
Sewing machinists, menders, darners and embroiderers 3,4
Gardeners and groundsmen/groundswomen 3,4
Other craft and related occupations 3,4
Security guards and related occupations 1 2 3,4
Other security and protective service occupations n.e.s 1 2 3,4
Care assistants and attendants 3,4
Caretakers 2 3,4
Launderers, dry cleaners and pressers 3,4
Undertakers, bookmakers and other personal service workers n.e.s 3,4
Tobacco process operatives 3,4
Other food and drink (incl. Brewing) process operatives 3,4
Spinners, doublers, twisters, winders and reelers 3,4
Other textiles processing operatives 3,4
Chemical, gas and petroleum process plant operatives 3,4
Plastics process operatives, moulders and extenders 3,4
Synthetic fibre and other chemical, paper, plastics and related operatives 3,4
Machine tool operatives (incl. CNC machine tool operatives) 3,4
Other automatic machine workers, metal polishers and dressing operatives 3,4
Assemblers and line workers (electrical and electronic goods) 3,4
Assemblers and line workers (metal goods and other goods) 3,4
Inspectors, viewers and laboratory testers 3,4
Packers, bottlers, canners, fillers, weighers, graders and sorters 3,4
Seafarers (merchant navy), barge and boat operatives 3,4
Electrical, energy, boiler and related plant operatives and attendants 3,4
Pipe layers/pipe jointers and related construction workers 3,4
Mine (excluding coal) and quarry workers 3,4
Other plant, machine and process operatives n.e.s 3,4
Fishing and related workers 3,4
Mates to metal , electrical and related fitters 3,4
Rail construction and maintenance workers 3,4
Postal workers and mail sorters 3,4
Hotel porters and kitchen porters 3,4
Other occupations in sales and services n.e.s 3,4

Unskilled

Water and sewerage plant attendants 3,4
Labourers in engineering and other making/processing industries 3,4
Road construction, paviors and kerb layers 3,4
Other building and civil engineering labourers 3,4

Stevedores and dockers 3,4
Goods porters 3,4
Refuse and salvage collectors 3,4
Drivers' mates 3,4
Window cleaners and car park attendants 3,4
Cleaners and domestics 3,4
All other labourers and related workers 3,4

Own account workers

General managers in large companies 2
Production and works managers 2
Building managers 2
Company financial managers 2
Purchasing managers 2
Personnel managers 2
Computer systems managers 2
Credit controllers 2
Bank and building society managers 2
Other financial managers n.e.s 2
Transport managers 2
Stores and warehousing managers 2
Garage managers and proprietors 2
Hotel and accommodation managers 2
Restaurant and catering managers 2
Publicans, innkeepers and club managers 2
Entertainment and sports managers 2
Travel agency managers 2
Managers and proprietors of butchers 2
Managers and proprietors of shops 2
Other managers n.e.s 2
Draughtspersons 2
Aircraft officers, traffic planners and controllers 2
Ship and hovercraft officers 2
Matrons, houseparents, welfare, community and youth workers 2
Photographers, camera, sound and video equipment operators 2
Professional athletes and sport officials 2
Vocational, industrial trainers and driving instructors 2
Accounts and wages clerks, bookkeepers and other financial clerks 2
Cashiers, bank and counter clerks 2
Debt, rent and other cash collectors 2
Filing, computer, library and other clerks n.e.s 2
Stores, storekeepers, warehousemen/women, dispatch and production control clerks 2
Secretaries, medical, legal, personal assistants, typists and word processor operators 2
Computer operators, data processing operators and other office machine operators 2
Bricklayers and masons 2
Roofers, slaters, tilers, sheeters and cladders 2
Plasterers 2
Glaziers 2
Builders and building contractors 2
Floorers, floor coverers, carpet fitters and planners, floor and wall tilers 2
Painters and decorators 2
Scaffolders, riggers, steeplejacks and other construction trades n.e.s 2
Toolmakers 2
Metal working production and maintenance fitters 2
Precision instrument maker, goldsmiths , silversmiths and precious stone workers 2
Other machine tool setters and CNC setter-operators n.e.s 2
Electricians and electrical maintenance fitter 2
Telephone fitters 2
Cable jointers and lines repairers 2
Radio,TV and video engineers 2
Computer engineers (installation and maintenance) 2
Other electrical and electronic trades n.e.s 2
Smiths, forge/metal plate workers and shipwrights 2
Plumbers, heating and ventilating engineers and related trades 2
Sheet steel workers 2

Welders and steel erectors 2
Motor mechanics, auto electricians, tyre and exhaust fitters 2
Vehicle body repairs, panel beaters and spray painters 2
Weavers, knitters, warp preparers, bleachers, dyers and finishers 2
Sewing machinists, menders, darners and embroiderers 2
Coach trimmers, upholsterers and mattress makers 2
Shoe repairers and other leather makers 2
Tailors, dressmakers, clothing cutters, milliners and furriers 2
Other textiles, garments and related trades n.e.s 2
Printers, originators and compositors 2
Bookbinders, print finishers and other printing trades n.e.s 2
Carpenters and joiners 2
Other woodworking trades n.e.s 2
Cabinetmakers 2
Bakers and flour confectioners 2
Butchers and meat cutters 2
Fishmongers and poultry dressers 2
Glass product and ceramics makers, finishers and other operatives 2
Gardeners and groundsmen/groundswomen 2
Horticulture trades 2
Other craft and related occupations 2
Chefs and cooks 2
Educational assistants 2
Hairdressers, barbers and beauticians 2
Launderers, dry cleaners and pressers 2
Undertakers, bookmakers and other personal service workers n.e.s 2
Importers, exporters, commodity and shipping brokers 2
Technical and wholesale sales representatives 2
Auctioneers, estimators, valuers and other sales representatives n.e.s 2
Roundsmen/women and van sales persons 2
Market/street traders and scrap dealers 2
Merchandisers, window dressers, floral arrangers and telephone salespersons 2
Moulders and furnace operatives (metal) 2
Electroplaters, galvanisers and colour coaters 2
Drivers of road goods vehicles 2
Bus conductors and coach drivers 2
Taxi/cab drivers, chauffeurs and couriers 2
Seafarers (merchant navy) barge and boat operatives 2
Mechanical plant drivers/ operatives and crane drivers 2
Fork truck drivers 2
Other transport and machinery operatives n.e.s 2
Pipe layers/pipe jointers and related construction workers 2
Woodworking machine operatives 2
Mine (excluding coal) and quarry workers 2
Other plant, machine and process operatives n.e.s 2
Fishing and related workers 2
Road construction, paviors and kerb layers 2
Other building and civil engineering labourers 2
Stevedores and dockers 2
Goods porters 2
Cleaners and domestics 2
Other occupations in sales and services n.e.s 2
All other labourers and related workers 2

Farmers

Farm owners and managers 1 2 3,4

Agricultural workers

Horticulture trades 3,4
Farm workers 3,4
Agricultural machinery and other farming occupations 3,4
Forestry workers 3,4

All others gainfully occupied

Gainfully occupied but occupation not stated 1 1 3,4
Librarians, archivists and curators 1 2

Tobacco process operatives 1 2
Refuse and salvage collectors 1 2
Window cleaners and car park attendants 1 2
All other gainful occupations n.e.s 2 3,4

Source: from Census 96:"*Principal Socio-economic Results, Dublin Stationery Office, 1998,"* pp. 115-24
* Employment status
(1) Self employed with paid employees;
(2) Self employed without paid employees;
(3) Employees;
(4) Assisting relative (not receiving a fixed wage or salary).